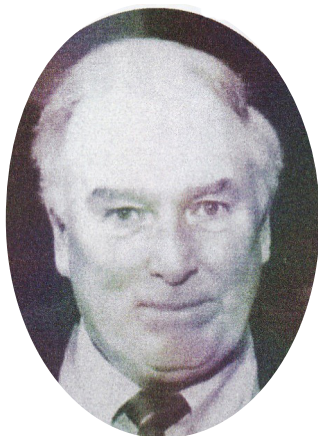


Don Quinn



Don Quinn certainly believes in making a good first impression. As a rookie head coach of the Norwalk High School boys basketball team in the 1971-72 season, Quinn guided the Bears to a sparkling 21-4 record and the FCIAC championship in the first year at the new high school.

In fact, after opening the season with back to back losses, NHS won nine straight games and 21 of its next 22 contests. The only loss during that stretch was a 67-63 setback against Danbury, which posted the best regular-season record in the conference at 16-1 to win the West I Division. Norwalk captured the East I title with a 15-2 record.

The two teams would meet again in the FCIAC final and this time Quinn coached the Norwalkers to a 61-54 victory and their first league crown in six years. The Bears would post two more wins, their 11th and 12th in a row, to reach the Class LL state semifinals where they finally lost to unbeaten and No. 1 Wilbur Cross, the eventual state champs.

Four of the five starters from that team would graduate, but Quinn took a revamped lineup the following year and led Norwalk High to a 16-win season and a return trip to the FCIAC championship game, where they fell to city rival Brien McMahon.

Even after a slow 3-6 start, a patient Quinn never wavered and instead led the Bears to 13 wins in their next 15 games, including an impressive 70-55 victory over Eastern Division champ Andrew Warde in the FCIAC semifinals. Norwalk would lose to eventual state champion Wilbur Cross again, this time in the Class LL quarterfinals.

It was also in 1973 that Quinn took over as head coach of the NHS boys track team, replacing the legendary Tom Scarso, who had retired. During his four years at the helm, Quinn coached a pair of state champions with Larry Miller winning the high jump and Tom Delmoor the decathlon. Delmoor would end up placing sixth nationally and later earn All-American honors in college.

Quinn's high school coaching resume also included eight years as assistant baseball coach under Jack Cronin, as well as serving as a basketball assistant under Ed Cerulli, who became a housemaster when the new Norwalk High opened. That created the opening for a head coach, which Quinn filled for the next six years.

But the New York City native's connection to local sports goes back even farther. He first began playing recreation baseball in Norwalk with Fitzgerald's All-Stars. A hard-throwing pitcher, Quinn played two years at St. Basil's Prep in Stamford and then three seasons at Mount St. Mary's College in Emmitsburgh, Maryland.

He would play his summer baseball, however, with the Laurel Athletic Club in the Norwalk City League and Stamford Twilight League. He eventually became player/manager of the team and helped lead the Laurels to back to back city championships as well as consecutive regular-season titles in the Stamford Twilight League, going a combined 29-6 in 1967.

Quinn also played basketball with Freddie's Bears in the early 1960s, and later with the Aristocrats, who won the Senior City League title.

But his most success came during a stellar 17-year career in the highly competitive Inter-City Touch Football League out of Norwalk, breaking in with the Rowayton Bears in 1962 and later playing with Georgetown.

His best years, however, came while playing with the Darien Sportsmen, who he quarterbacked to a perfect 12-0 record and the league championship in 1970, the same year he was the leading passer in the ICTFL.

The following year Quinn helped lead the Sportsmen to a 10-0 regular season before being upset in the playoffs by the Stamford Nobles. Among Quinn's teammates on the Darien team were past Norwalk Old Timers honorees Guido Bossone (1992), Mike Santa Lucia (2002), Milt Peckham (2006), Bob Barate (2007), and fellow 2009 award winner Phil Tegano.

"I was fortunate to have the opportunity to play with some great athletes and Don Quinn was one of them," Danny Letizia, another 2009 honoree who played with Quinn on the Georgetown team, said. "He was such a great competitor. He threw the football so hard, 150 miles an hour. If you didn't catch it he'd take your head off."

"He could throw the ball 80 yards with an arc on it," added Frank Fay, a 1998 Old Timers honoree and one of the league's founders who was a teammate of Quinn's with Rowayton. "We had some great quarterbacks in our league and Donny Quinn was one of the best."

Quinn continued to play even during his coaching days at Norwalk High, finally calling it a career following the 1978 season, a couple of months shy of his 41st birthday.

Since 2000, Quinn has resided in Lewes, Del., and he and his wife of 48 years, Kay, are founding members of their parish in Lewes and active members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Still in pretty good shape, Quinn has raised more than \$34,000 for MS in his last 11 rides in the annual "Bike to the Bay." The Quinns have seven children and 25 grandchildren.