

Chris Santopietro



In a city which has produced its share of elite running backs over the years at three high schools, **CHRIS SANTOPIETRO** took his rightful place among the very best in the fall of 1982.

The 6-foot-1, 210-pound bruising fullback definitely shot to the top of the list at Central Catholic with a record-breaking senior season that saw him become the all-time leading scorer and rusher in Cavaliers football history.

Santopietro scored a city-leading 14 touchdowns that season, finding the end zone at least once in seven of the Central's 10 games. That included a 7-0 win over Masuk in which he scored the game's only touchdown to break a scoreless deadlock with 1:59 left to play.

No. 87 also had a pair of two-touchdown games that season, another with three TDs, and one with four. And in one of the three games where Santopietro didn't score a

TD, he ran for a two-point conversion with 1:09 left to play to give the Cavs a dramatic 8-7 victory over defending Class L state champion Newtown in Week 2.

That would be his only conversion run of the season, and combined with the 14 touchdowns, Santopietro finished with 86 points to win the city scoring championship. He also rushed for at least 100 yards in six games, including three with over 200 yards, and he gained 99 and 93 yards in two of the four contests, which he fell short of the century mark.

Santopietro's final season in a CCHS uniform included several memorable performances. Like the three-touchdown, 206-yard rushing effort he put together playing just three quarters in a 27-6 win over Immaculate. Or the game in which the workhorse running back carried the ball an amazing 38 times for 135 yards and scored the only two TDs in a 14-0 win over Norwalk High, undoubtedly one of the sweetest victories of his career. Even more amazing was the fact Santopietro dislocated his finger just four minutes into the game and yet played the rest of the way.

But Chris Santopietro was never better than he was on Thanksgiving morning 1982 when, his final high school game, he scored four touchdowns and rushed for 232 yards in Central

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Tom Gaal, CCHS '83

Catholic's 41-20 win against longtime rival St. Mary's of Greenwich to wrap up a successful 7-3 season.

Santopietro also rewrote the CCHS record book as his fourth and final touchdown with 3:22 left enabled him to become the Cavaliers' all-time leading scorer with 128 career points. Meanwhile, his big game on the ground made him the school's all-time rushing leader with 1,325 yards.

Yes, Santopietro definitely saved his best for last.

And as dominating as he was on offense, Santopietro also shined on defense as one of the top linebackers in the Western Connecticut Conference. His play on both sides of the ball not only earned him a spot on the All-WCC team, but Santopietro was a unanimous choice as MVP of the *The Hour's* 1982 All-City Football Team.

Football wasn't the only sport Santopietro excelled in, either. He was also a standout basketball player for the Cavaliers and not

long after he closed out his scholastic career on the gridiron, the two-sport captain captured his second city scoring title in four months by averaging 18.5 points a game. He became only the fourth CCHS basketball player to lead the city in scoring and the first in seven seasons. He had finished fourth as a junior with 16.5 ppg.

Santopietro continued his football career at the University of Rhode Island and later, upon returning to Norwalk, was active in local youth sports. Together with good friend Matt Hefferan, they started the Norwalk Grizzlies football team for players in second-through-eighth grades and competed against other Fairfield County teams in a PAL-sponsored instructional tackle football league. Several players from the Grizzlies went on to play at the two local high schools.

The former city basketball scoring champ also became a volunteer coach in the Norwalk Jr. Basketball program while finding time to be an active volunteer in local Special Olympics.