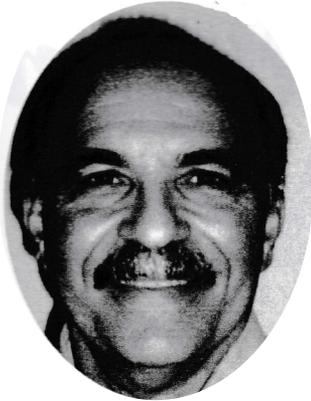


John Santorella



Long before John Santorella became Dr. John Santorella, he was performing a different kind of root canal on baseball diamonds with his bat and glove.

The well-known Norwalk dentist enjoyed success at every level of baseball he played at. As an 11-year-old in 1959, he was an all-star outfielder for the league champion YMCA team in the American Little League. The following year, as a 12 year-old with the YMCA, Santorella belted a league-record 14 home runs in 18 games, still among the best single-season marks in the history of Norwalk youth baseball.

He made the all-star team again and displayed his talents on the mound by pitching a one-hitter and striking out 13 batters in a win over the Rowayton LL all-stars. Moving up to the PONY League, Santorella played outfield for A.J. Collins for two years and made the all-star team both years. He also played in the Norwalk Babe Ruth League and Colt Leagues, as well as with the American Legion Post 12 team.

But perhaps the most memorable chapter of Santorella's baseball career came at Brien McMahon High School, which was still in its infancy when he arrived there in the fall of 1963 from Benjamin

Franklin Junior High.

As a sophomore, Santorella was an outfielder for coach Ralph King on the JV team, but started in the outfield for the Senators his junior and senior years. In fact, he was the senior captain of McMahon's 1966 state championship team, which is still the only state title team in the history of high school baseball in Norwalk.

A first-team All-FCIAC outfielder that season, Santorella led the Senators in runs scored and triples, finished second in walks and stolen bases, and batted over .300, including a 5-for-5 game against Stamford. Defensively, he did not commit an error the entire season, a season that culminated with a 4-0 win over Bobby Valentine and Rippowam High School of Stamford in the state finals.

Santorella is the fourth member of that 1966 team to be honored by the Norwalk Old Timers, joining his coach Frank Morgan (1991) and teammates Terry Blitz (2006) and Joe Liberatore (2007).

Following his graduation, Santorella played baseball at the University of Bridgeport from 1967-70, starting in the outfield his last three years. As a junior, he led the Purple Knights with 17 stolen bases and again played errorless ball in the outfield while throwing out five base runners.

He was named captain his senior year and again led the team in stolen bases and defensively. At one point, he put together a 23-game hitting streak which began his junior season and continued into his senior year.

Santorella excelled in the classroom as well as on the diamond. He was a Dana Scholar at UB, while at McMahon he was a member of the National Honor Society.

During the summer, Santorella played baseball with the Generals, who he helped win the Norwalk City League championship, while also playing in the Stamford Twilight League.

He later played softball with Chatham Oaks, a local powerhouse, in the late 1960s, Mike's Deli in the early '70s and Frank's Chevron in the '80s, two teams that won city championships, and from 1986-96 with Redding PBA, which captured a league crown.

Santorella managed to remain close to the game of baseball as a certified umpire for seven years, officiating games in Little League, Babe Ruth, high school and college. He also coached his two sons' Little League teams in Redding from 1989-96.

While he's best known for his baseball career, growing up Santorella also played football. He was a running back and played on defense for the Norwalk Ramblers in the early days of Pop Warner Football in the city, leading the team in scoring for two years and to undefeated seasons both years. He also played one year of football at Brien McMahon, starting at running back for the JV team as a sophomore.

Santorella played for no less than 10 coaches who have been honored by the Norwalk Old Timers: Dom and Quinto Christopher (1985 and 2002) in Little League, Ralph Tucci (2008) in PONY League, Frank Morgan (1991), Leroy Vaughn (1991) and Ralph King (1996) at McMahon, Mike Santa Lucia in the Norwalk City League, and Bobby Callahan (1986), Jay Callahan (1986) and Gene Callahan (1991) in Pop Warner. Another one of his early coaches was his father Frank Santorella.

A graduate of the University of Maryland Dentrall School, Santorella began his dentist practice in Norwalk in 1974 and is now in his 38th year. He is a member of the Norwalk Dental Society and has also been a member of the Redding Boys and Girls Club, and the Laurel Athletic Club.

Santorella and his wife, the former Susan Knight, reside in Redding and became grandparents for the first time a year ago in June.