

Frank Vigilante



Franks Vigilante has made sports a part of his life in one form or another for parts of six decades.

Born in 1943, Vigilante grew up in South Norwalk on Meadow Street, just a long fly ball away from Amusement Park. It was there as a youngster Vigilante watched the famous Buschbaum family and others play various sports, and where he himself first became interested in athletics in the early 1950s.

Vigilante quickly earned a reputation as a sure-gloved infielder for Kiwanis in the National Little League and as a 12-year-old made the all-star team. One of his fondest memories in sports was belting a three-run homer in the top of the sixth to give his team a 3-1 win over the Pastimes. What made that particular home run even more memorable to Vigilante was the fact that it went over the centerfield fence at Hooper Field and landed right in front of his father.

He moved up to the Babe Ruth League where he played for Professional Pharmacy and made the all-star team back to back seasons. Then from 1956-58, Vigilante played three sports while in junior high school, adding soccer and basketball to baseball. He also played on several travel teams in basketball and baseball during that time for such renowned local coaches as Antone Zakhar, Chick

Ciccarelli, Charlie Provenzano, Guido Bassone and Frank Morgan, among others.

But it was at Norwalk High School where Frank Vigilante really made a name for himself in the late '50s and early '60s. He continued to play three sports, but switched from soccer to football, where he was a two-way starter at halfback and linebacker as a senior in the fall of 1960.

Vigilante also lettered in baseball and as a senior he was the starting centerfielder for the 1961 NHS team that won the final County Conference championship (the FCIAC began the following school year).

One of Vigilante's teammates on that title-winning team was fellow 2008 Old Timers honoree Dick Zakhar. In fact, after tonight, eight members from the '61 championship Norwalk High team will have been honored by the Norwalk Old Timers.

That summer Vigilante led the Norwalk American Legion baseball team in hitting, and also played for the Laurel AC in the Norwalk City League and Stamford Twilight League. He also played basketball locally in the industrial and recreation leagues.

Following his graduation from Norwalk High, Vigilante attended prep school at Brewster Academy on a football and baseball scholarship. He started at shortstop for the baseball team, while one of his teammates in football was Milt Moran, a future tight end with the Cleveland Browns.

From Brewster Academy, Vigilante went to the University of Vermont where he played freshmen basketball in 1962. But his collegiate career was curtailed by injuries and Vigilante transferred to the University of Bridgeport, where he majored in Physical Education and Health. While at UB, Vigilante stayed involved in sports as an assistant football coach at Norwalk High under Carl Paight for two years.

After receiving his BS, MS and Sixth Year degrees from UB, Vigilante began his teaching career at West Rocks Junior High School in 1968-69, where he continued to help out coaching.

It was right around this same time that Vigilante began playing softball with such local powerhouses as the Norwalk Aces and Singewald Buick, while also playing with Risilo Paving. Among his teammates with those clubs were Milt Peckham, Bill Smith, Jon Myers, Fred Santarella and Bob Barate.

In 1968, Vigilante's athletic career took on a different twist when he began officiating soccer, football, basketball and baseball in the FCIAC, MBIAC and Western Connecticut Conference.

A year later he moved to Stamford and in 1970 began teaching in the Stamford School System. He also coached and officiated in Stamford youth leagues, and refereed basketball games in the Industrial League in Stamford.

Also during the 1970s, Vigilante coached football and officiated soccer, basketball and baseball at New Canaan County Day School. He also coached sixth-grade football at Center School in the New Canaan Recreation League. Then in the 1980s, Vigilante coached youth soccer as well as Little League and Babe Ruth travel teams in Stamford.

Vigilante spent his last 25 years of teaching at Stamford High School where he stayed involved in football, basketball and hockey as a faculty representative performing such duties as site director, ticket sales, security and advisor. He retired from teaching in 2005 after 37 years.

A father of three and grandfather of four, Vigilante has been married for 39 years to the former Jane Rinaldi.