

Kevin Connolly



Some athletes travel a slightly different road to success. That was certainly the case with Kevin Connolly, literally and figuratively.

Connolly grew up in Norwalk playing youth sports in the late 1950s and early '60s. But he went to high school a few miles up the line at Fairfield Prep, where he was a three-year starting quarterback and became a high school All-American.

He began playing organized sports in 1957 as a nine-year-old in the Norwalk American Little League. He played four years and made the all-star team as an 11-year-old in 1959 and again in 1960 when he was 12. He would go on to play the next two years in the Norwalk Pony League.

Connolly also played Pop Warner Football from 1959–61 and Biddy Basketball in '60 and '61. He was the quarterback on the 1961 Norwalk Ramblers football team that went a perfect 9–0.

The versatile Connolly also found time to play tennis in the summer and won a number of titles at both Shorehaven and Shore & Country Club between 1957–61.

All roads led to Fairfield Prep where he played four years in the Jesuits' highly regarded football program. In fact, he never played freshmen football, instead breaking in as the starting quarterback on the junior varsity team and serving as the second-string varsity QB as a ninth grader in the fall of 1962.

Connolly would be the starting varsity QB the next three seasons, leading Prep to three straight winning campaigns, including an 8–2 record as a senior in 1965. The Jesuits shared the Metropolitan Bridgeport Interscholastic Athletic Conference (MBIAC) championship that season and crushed Stamford 33–0 in their annual Thanksgiving Day rivalry game.

Longtime Norwalk High School coach Pete Tucci, also a Fairfield Prep grad, remembers Connolly's career, both in his youth sports days and in high school.

"I was a classmate of his from first grade to 12th at St. Joe's and then Prep," Tucci said. "He was football and I went more toward baseball, but we grew up together. We played basketball and baseball at St. Joe's and Pop Warner.

"He was a star. I wasn't, but he was," Tucci added. "At Prep, he was like our Calvin Murphy. Some kids just walk on the field and they shine. He was one of those kids."

Connolly's final season at Fairfield Prep was also the first year of legendary head coach Earl Lavery's 28 seasons, retiring in 1992 with a then state-record 230 victories. Connolly played a major role in the first eight of those wins.

The Norwalk QB was voted All-MBIAC as a junior and senior, and he capped off his scholastic career by being named a first-team Catholic Prep All-American in 1965.

Connolly also played freshmen baseball at Fairfield Prep, but broke his collarbone in a non-sports accident in the winter of his sophomore year and did not continue playing any longer. He did, however, join the tennis team his senior year and was good enough to earn a varsity letter in his only season.

Then, following his graduation from Prep in 1966, Connolly entered the United States Military Academy at West Point. He played football his freshman year, but another offseason accident — this time resulting in a dislocated and broken elbow — ended his gridiron career.

He did, however, continue his education at USMA and after graduating Connolly was accepted into the United States Army Airborne School — widely known as 'Jump School' — and then the U.S. Army Ranger School, an intense combat leadership course.

"He loved challenges and he always rose to those challenges," Tucci recalled. "He challenged himself."

Connolly went on to serve in Vietnam as an Infantry Rifle Platoon leader and spent 14 years in the Active and Reserve Army, finishing his military career as a Major.

"He was always one of the smartest kids and always the best athlete," Tucci said. "He had everything going for him.

"As a sophomore, he scored more points than anyone on the football team. Even seniors looked up to him. He always had leadership, as evidenced by him going to West Point."

After returning home, Connolly worked for Pitney Bowes for 28 years, the last 14 as a vice president. He retired in April 2012 and moved to Fort Mill, S.C., where he currently resides. He continues to work for Pitney Bowes part time on various projects.