

Al Tortorella



The City of Norwalk has certainly produced its share of elite high school lacrosse players since the fast-growing sport was introduced locally nearly half a century ago.

But it was **AL TORTORELLA** who first put Norwalk on the national map when the former Norwalk High School standout goalie became the city's first lacrosse All-American in 1979.

Four decades later, in 2018, Al Tortorella's lacrosse career came full circle when he was inducted into the USA Lacrosse Connecticut Hall of Fame, not only for his achievements as a high school and collegiate player, but also for his contributions to the sport off the field.

Tortorella's lacrosse journey, however, began in Norwalk. He was just an inexperienced, brand-new-to-the-sport freshman in the spring of 1976 when he decided to try out for the NHS lacrosse team, which was still a club sport in just its second year. On the first day of practice, head coach Randy McCue asked if anyone wanted

to volunteer to play goalie and Tortorella raised his hand and decided to give it a try. With that, he became the second goalie in the history of the Norwalk High lacrosse program.

The following season, 1977, the Bears were elevated to an official varsity sport and Tortorella began to elevate his game. So much so, in fact, that as a junior one year later he was named to both the All-FCIAC and all-state first teams. This coming when the FCIAC was by far and away the best conference in the state.

Then as a senior in '79, Tortorella posted an amazing 82 percent save percentage. To put that in perspective, at the time, high school goalies in the low 60 percent were considered outstanding. Tortorella not only received all-conference and all-state honors again, but he earned the *Most Valuable Player* award in the annual Connecticut Public School versus New England Prep School all-star game.

Tortorella's outstanding high school career caught the attention of several collegiate programs and he would go on to play Division I lacrosse at Mount Saint Mary College in Maryland. During his four-year career with the Mountaineers from 1980-83, Tortorella earned a number of defensive awards for his play in goal, and in 1981 he was credited with 91 saves and only 50 goals against for a .645 save percentage, the seventh-best mark by a Mount St. Mary's goalie in school history.

Even after his graduation from the Mount, Tortorella's lacrosse career was far from over as he continued to shine as a goalie with several highly regarded club teams, including the Skoal Bandits and the Green Turtle Lacrosse Club in Maryland.

Then when his playing days were finally behind him, Tortorella remained close to the sport he loved by giving back to the lacrosse community. He helped his former high school coach Randy McCue and a few other lacrosse enthusiasts establish the Norwalk Junior Lacrosse organization, which became a successful feeding program for both local high schools. It's where a number of players got their start in the sport and went on to follow in Tortorella's footsteps as future all-conference, all-state, and all-American players.

Tortorella also found himself back on the playing field as a longstanding high school and collegiate lacrosse umpire in Connecticut. In addition to being a member of the Connecticut Lacrosse Officials Association (CLOA) and the Western Connecticut Officials Association (WCLOA), Tortorella is a member of the National Intercollegiate Lacrosse Officials Association. He also served on the Executive Board of CLOA and presently serves as a U.S. Lacrosse certified observer.