

*Posthumous Honoree  
Joe Santo Sr.*



**J**OE SANTO SR., a name synonymous with baseball and championships in Norwalk for more than three decades before, during, and after The Great Depression, is being honored posthumously by the Norwalk Old Timers for his past contributions to the local sports community.

Santo was a fixture on Norwalk baseball diamonds during a bygone era as a player, manager, and coach. It was the latter, however, where he made his biggest impact, coaching 11 different teams and winning league championships with six of those clubs, in some cases multiple titles. His resume includes coaching stints with local powerhouses like the Strawberry Hill Athletic Club, the Pastimes AC, Norwalk Tire, and the Connecticut Potato Chips.

Santo was also well known in baseball circles throughout Fairfield County and beyond. In fact, he served as a scout with the New York Yankees and was able to get a number of his players minor league tryouts with several professional teams.

But coaching is what Joe Santo enjoyed most. His legendary coaching career began near the end of World War I when, at the age of 19, he guided the Firestone team in 1917 and '18, winning the first of his many championships. After a brief hiatus, Santo returned to the coaching sidelines with the Harris Glass Company from 1922 to '24, and then hooked up with Rex AC from 1925-29.

After one season coaching Texas Lunch in 1930, Santo made out the lineup card for the Robins AC in 1931 and '32, before taking over Strawberry Hill in 1933 and then Colonial AC in 1934 and '35. After World War II ended, Santo spent the 1945 and '46 seasons coaching the Potato Chips and adding another league crown to his collection. After one season with Sirois AA in 1947, Santo ended his coaching career winning championships with Norwalk Tire in 1948 and the Pastimes in 1949.

All told, Santo won championships with Firestone, Rex AC, the Robins AC, Potato Chips, Norwalk Tire, and the Pastimes. His great 1948 Norwalk Tire team was regarded as one of the best clubs Santo coached. One of the best hitters on the team was Tom Scarso while the team captain was Phil Matregrano, both of whom were honored posthumously by the Norwalk Old Timers in 2015 and 2016, respectively. Matregrano, who had a longtime association with Santo, would become a local legendary coach himself years later and became known to many as 'Skipper.' One can't help but think Santo was a big influence along the way.

Santo impacted a lot of people in and out of baseball, and on Sept. 19, 1953, the city of Norwalk honored him with "Joe Santo Day" at Duffy Field. As part of the tribute, Santo was presented with a beautiful engraved trophy from his former players, including Matregrano, who made the presentation.

Following the ceremony, an exhibition game was played between the "All Stars," a team made up of former players who played for Santo, and the younger "Norwalks," comprised of active players. Fittingly, Santo's 'old timers' presented their former coach a 9-3 victory.

Some 20 years later, in 1973, Joe Santo Sr. passed away at the age of 72, but 50 years after his passing, his legacy is remembered and honored by the Norwalk Old Timers.



Joe Santo Sr. (left), a 2023 Norwalk Old Timers posthumous honoree, accepts the trophy that his former players presented to him on "Joe Santo Day" in 1953 at Duffy Field for his over three decades of coaching local baseball teams. Making the presentation is Phil Matregrano (right), one of his former players, while local sportsman 'Chick' Ciccarelli (center) also took part in the ceremony. Matregrano and Ciccarelli are both Old Timers honorees.



The trophy Joe Santo Sr. received on "Joe Santo Day" in 1953.