

Tom Shostak



Tom Shostak secured his place in Norwalk sports history a little more than half a century ago.

Back on Oct. 28, 1961, Shostak scored the first touchdown in the storied football rivalry between Norwalk and Brien McMahon high schools. In fact, the NHS quarterback and senior co-captain also scored the second and third touchdowns in the cross-town series to lead the Green Wave to a 28-0 victory in that initial contest played at what is now Malmquist Field behind Norwalk City Hall, which was the old Norwalk High School.

The 5-foot-11, 190-pound Shostak scored on a 6-yard quarterback keeper in the first quarter, added a 71-yard TD run in the third period, and ran five yards for the game's third touchdown in the final

stanza. He also ran for a two-point conversion to account for 20 of his team's 28 points, while passing for another two points. He capped off his three-year high school career by being named an Honorable Mention All-American.

Football wasn't the only sport Shostak played at NHS. He also played three years of hockey, two years of baseball, and ran track one year, and as a senior was voted the school's "Best All-Around Athlete."

An excellent student, Shostak went to Cornell University and was the starting quarterback for the freshmen team as well as the team's punter and placekicker. He made the varsity as a sophomore, but an early-season knee injury ended his collegiate career. It didn't end his athletic career, however. Shostak eventually switched to bicycle racing as a way to keep in shape and joined the Cornell bicycle racing team while also playing club hockey for one year.

After graduating from Cornell with a degree in Education, Shostak returned to NHS in the fall of 1967 as an assistant coach, running the offense for head coach Carl Paight, who was an assistant when he played. Shostak was on the sideline when Norwalk beat McMahon 12-7 that '67 season and the Green Wave would finish 6-2-1 for their first winning season since the 1948 state championship team.

Shostak also taught English at the newly opened Roton Middle School that year and served as head coach of the Brien McMahon hockey team during the 1967-68 season.

But Shostak's return to Norwalk was a short one. The following year he earned his Master's degree at Michigan State University — during which time he met his wife Susan — and he came back East as an associate professor at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, N.J., where he taught from 1970-83.

During those years, he stayed active in sports playing in adult hockey and softball leagues, and coaching in a junior hockey league. He also became a football referee, officiating high school and Pop Warner games for more than a decade.

In between games, Shostak found time to earn his doctorate degree in Educational Leadership from Fairleigh Dickinson University in 1979. He would leave Brookdale CC to become the Assistant Dean at Rockland Community College in Suffern, N.Y., a year later was named Dean of Instruction at Palm Beach CC in Florida, and two years later became an associate vice president and director of Continuing Education at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, a position he held for 10 years.

While in Florida, Shostak continued to officiate football games and even served as a head coach in the local Pop Warner Football program, fulfilling his dream to someday coach his own football team. In 1996, Shostak moved from Florida to the Midwest to become Dean of Lifelong Learning at Ohio University.

He retired in 2007, although he still serves as a senior consultant for the Center of International Studies at the college, traveling to many countries — primarily the Middle East — to set up educational programs. He remains a part-time faculty member in the OU College of Education.

The son of former Norwalk Mayor John Shostak (1959-61) was briefly involved in politics himself while living in New Jersey, serving as a county chairman of a political party.

It all began in Norwalk, however, for Tom Shostak, who played four years for Pepperidge Farm in the newly formed International Little League. He then moved up to the Babe Ruth League where he played for Professional Pharmacy, the team his father, as owner of the local pharmacy, sponsored. Shostak also played three years in the Norwalk Biddy Basketball League.

A father of two, Shostak and his wife Susan have been married 40 years and reside in Lancaster, Ohio.