

Brian Kennedy



BRIAN KENNEDY refused to let obstacles and challenges in his life keep him from fostering an active and successful career in athletics.

Despite being born with Cerebral Palsy and never able to play competitive sports, Brian took a different route to become a key part of several teams while growing up. His journey began at Wolfpit Elementary School, where he became the manager of the basketball team. Kennedy's passion for sports followed him to Nathan Hale Middle School, where he was the manager of the football and basketball teams.

Then when he arrived as a freshman at Norwalk High School in the fall of 1972, Brian started attending all the freshmen football team's games as a fan. That's when Jack Cronin, the former NHS football coach who later became

a football official, recruited Kennedy to work the "chains" on the sidelines. Before long, Carl Paight, the Bears' head football coach at the time, brought Brian on board as the team manager.

When fall turned to winter, Norwalk High basketball coach Don Quinn asked Brian to be the Bears' team manager, and in the spring, Cronin, still the NHS baseball coach, did the same. With that, Kennedy became a "three-sport" participant.

In 1975, Sam Testa replaced Paight as head football coach and Brian, who lived across the street from the Bears' new coach, developed a special friendship. Testa would even give him a ride to and from school every day.

"Brian Kennedy was our 12th man," recalled Joe Madaffari, the Bears' quarterback back then and now a member of the Norwalk Old Timers Board. "He was a real part of the team. When we walked on the field, Brian Kennedy walked with us. He was even the Homecoming King his senior year."

All four coaches Kennedy served as a team manager under—Carl Paight, Jack Cronin, Sam Testa, and Don Quinn—are all past Norwalk Old Timers honorees.

But Kennedy's involvement in local sports wasn't limited to just Norwalk High. After his freshman year, he became the timekeeper for the Norwalk Recreation summer basketball league and he took on more responsibilities with the rec department over the next three summers. Between that and his experience as a team manager, it was no surprise that Brian went on to major in Recreation and Leisure Studies when he attended Southern Connecticut State University.

Then after graduating with his degree in 1980, Kennedy landed a job as a recreation supervisor in Norwalk, and a few years later he joined the Greenwich Parks and Recreation Department. That in turn led to a security position at Greenwich High School, and with his background in sports, he eventually added the position of the Cardinals' athletic manager. He retired from his full-time security job in 2022, but has continued as athletic manager on a part-time basis.

And similar to his time in Norwalk, Kennedy became a popular figure in the Greenwich sports

KENNEDY, from p.31

community. So much so that in 2014 he was honored by the Greenwich Old Timers.

“I built my foundation in Norwalk and I was able to bring it to Greenwich. But I don’t forget

where I came from,” Kennedy, who still lives in Norwalk, said at the time. “I wouldn’t be in Greenwich without the people in Norwalk.” ■

MORTELL STOLARSKI, from p.43

medals—four individual events and two relays—in the 60-64 age division at the Y Nationals in Fort Lauderdale. What’s more, her time in the 50 backstroke ranked No. 1 among the all-time top 10 times in her age group while she was No. 2 all-time in two other events and among the top-10 in her other three events. Since 1988, her times in U.S. Masters Swimming meets have consistently landed in the top-10 all-time in the age division she competed in.

VAUGHN, from p.45

Some 68 years after Olsen played in his last big league game, Mo Vaughn made his Major League debut, walking his first time up and finishing 0-for-2. But the next night he collected his first Major League hit against the Orioles in Baltimore, and two days later, also in Baltimore, Vaughn hit his first Major League home run, a 438-foot shot. One night later in Milwaukee, he belted a 435-foot homer and finished with four RBIs.

Those first few games were a preview of things to come. By 1993, Mo Vaughn had established himself as one of the game’s most lethal hitters as he rang up 29 HRs, 101 RBIs, and batted .297 in his third season. It was the best offensive season by a left-handed hitter in Boston in 15 years.

The player who became known as the Hit Dog had a season to remember in 1995 when he hit 39 homers, drove in 126 runs, scored another 98, and batted an even .300 while leading the Red Sox to the AL East Division title. It also earned Maurice Vaughn the *1995 American League Most Valuable Player Award*. He had an even better season in 1996 when he recorded 44 HRs, 143 RBIs, and hit .326—all career highs.

Mo would enjoy two more productive seasons in Boston before playing two years with the Angels and parts of two seasons with the Mets. Hampered by injuries, the three-time all-star retired one month into 2003 season, finishing his career with 328 home runs, 1,064 RBIs, and a .293 batting average.

Sheila still trains three times a week and when not competing she manages to find the time to teach swimming. Of course, her love for the sport is certainly no surprise. Her mother, the late Marie Corridon Mortell of Norwalk, won the Olympic gold medal in swimming at the 1948 Summer Games in London. She was honored by the *Norwalk Old Timers* in 1996 and now, 28 years later, is joined by her daughter. ■

Since retiring, Vaughn has been involved in several successful business ventures, including a real estate company that purchases properties in depressed areas around the country and renovates and restores apartments and units to provide affordable low-income housing. One such property was a building in Yonkers, N.Y., once owned by Jackie Robinson, Vaughn’s hero. Only fitting that Maurice was the last African-American player to wear Robinson’s No. 42 when it was retired by MLB.

“For me, when I’m deciding what form of business to pursue next, it’s been all about what people need,” he once said.

Some of Mo’s other post-baseball business ventures include being president of his own trucking company, ‘Mo Vaughn Transport,’ starting a Big & Tall clothing line called ‘MVP Collections,’ and launching a sports academy in Florida where he transitioned into coaching.

But perhaps the project he’s most proud of was the *Mo Vaughn Youth Development Program* he founded in 1994 during his time with the Red Sox. It was no surprise when he was named American League MVP a year later that Mo held his press conference at a youth center in Boston. That same year, when he was selected to his first MLB All-Star Game, Mo received the *1995 Bart Giamatti Award* for Community Service for his philanthropic work.

Maurice learned all about “giving back” from his parents Shirley and Leroy Vaughn, who was a 1991 *Norwalk Old Timers* honoree. ■

CURRIE, from p.47

Championships in South Carolina. He also coached Pop Warner Football in Fairfield and freshmen football at Fairfield Prep.

Aside from his involvement in sports, Tim Currie has long been a fixture in the community as the third-generation owner of Currie’s Tires, a Norwalk landmark since 1929. Tim began working at the West Avenue establishment as a teenager, first for his grandfather Duke, then his father Len, before taking over the day-to-day operation. His two sons, Adam and Tim Jr., represent the fourth generation of the Currie Family to run the business, now in its 96th year.

In 2013 Tim added another chapter to his life when he started the Motown Review Band, which later became ‘Tim Currie’s Motown Band.’ Many shows, free to the public, took

place in the parking lot of his tire business and would draw overflowing crowds. Many of his shows raised money for several charities, including St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital and Toys for Tots.

Tim, on drums, and his popular band performed at Calf Pasture Beach, the Oyster Festival, the Mayor’s Ball, and the Norwalk Green. It was on the Green on Aug. 24, 2019, at a show organized by Norwalk’s First Taxing District, when he suddenly collapsed on stage and passed away at the age of 66.

Five years later, however, his accomplishments in local sports annals are remembered as the *Norwalk Old Timers* honor Tim Currie posthumously. ■

BILLMEYER FAMILY, from p.49

“The support in the community has been unbelievable,” Blake said. “My sisters and I start collecting raffle prizes in August.”

Local sponsorships also bring in a lot of donations.

“This year we had 10 breakfast sponsors, five more for lunch and seven sponsors for the dinner,” Blake noted.

Tee sponsors have also exploded over the years.

“I can remember the first year we couldn’t cover every hole. Now we get two or three tee sponsors for every hole.”

But perhaps the biggest indication of how much the tournament has grown is the number of golfers who play—or want to play—every year.

“The first year we had 15 foursomes,” Blake pointed out. “This year we had two groups on every hole. Unfortunately we have to tell a lot of people they can’t play because we don’t have room. I never thought we would have to turn people away, but a lot of people who can’t play still come to the dinner to support us. This year

we had 144 golfers and about 185 who came for dinner. We’re already sold out now for next year.

“I recall one year it rained so hard, it was pouring, but of the 144 golfers who signed up, 143 still showed up and most of them stayed out there all 18 holes.”

The expanded field of golfers also necessitated a change of venue as the tournament eventually moved from Silvermine to Oak Hills.

“We just outgrew Silvermine and I hated to leave,” Blake said. “My parents both belonged to the Silvermine Golf Club and we played the tournament there the first four years. The first year they planted a tree on the 17th fairway for my parents.”

But while the course has changed, the mission of the Billmeyer Memorial has remained the same and the spirit has continued for 19 years and counting. *The 2024 Norwalk Old Timers Athletic Association Mike Errico Award* is a testament to that. ■