

Bill Connery



Unlike many other honorees past and present, **Bill Connery** wasn't involved in several different sports and didn't play for a number of local teams.

No, he was best known for just one sport in his athletic career, and only played for a couple of local teams. But his exploits on the field in one particular game secured Connery's place in this city's proud and rich sports history forever.

Billy Connery scored arguably the biggest touchdown in Norwalk High School football history. As a member of the 1938 NHS eleven, Connery's 55-yard touchdown reception gave the Green and White a 14-7 win on January 2, 1939 in its famous post season bowl game in Jacksonville, FL, against that city's High School All-Stars.

Born and raised in South Norwalk, William D. Connery attended St. Joseph School before enrolling in Norwalk High School, from which he graduated in 1940.

He would play three years of varsity football for coach Ike Kern, including the 1938 championship team, the same year the new high school on East Avenue opened. Connery was a junior halfback and defensive back on that squad, and led by fellow running mate Harry "Mickey" Connolly, the Norwalkers went 7-1-2 during the regular season. They then beat Stamford 20-14 in a postseason game on December 3, 1938 before 9,000 fans at the new Boyle Stadium in Stamford.

It was determined the winner of that game would go to Florida for a New Year's bowl game, and Norwalk High's invitation captured the city's imagination like no other sporting event had before. In fact, one-third of the city's population gathered at the South Norwalk Railroad Station to give the NHS gridders a gallant sendoff.

Against the talented Jacksonville High School All-Stars, Norwalk trailed 7-0 when Connolly scored on a one-yard run in the third quarter and added the extra point to tie the game.

Then in the final period, with the ball on his own 45, Connolly fired a halfback option pass 31 yards downfield to Connery at the Jacksonville 24. The fleet-footed Connery then outraced several defenders to the end zone to complete the 55-yard pass-play and score the winning touchdown in Norwalk High's dramatic victory.

To this day, it is still one of the most memorable victories in city history, evidenced by the 15,000 delirious Norwalk fans who greeted the team home at the railroad station. And one of the biggest cheers was reserved for Billy Connery.

"He was an outstanding football player," Lou D'Orso, a member of the Old Timers committee, recalled. "Back then, Mickey Connolly just overshadowed everybody, but Billy was just as good."

"Bill Connery was one tough little guy," added Bob Smith, another committee member.

While best known for his gridiron success at Norwalk High, Connery did play football for a couple of other teams. He went on to play halfback at Boston College for coach Denny Meyers, graduating in 1944.

Following college, Connery joined the Marines and fought in Okinawa and northern China.

Connery then played the 1949 season with the Spring Hill Tigers, where he shared the quarterback duties with fellow 2002 Old Timers honoree Al Boczer. That would also turn out to be Spring Hill's 12th and final season.

Now 81 and retired, Connery was a New England regional salesman in the chemical and plastic industry.