

Hall of Fame

Lorenzo: Southington Sports Hall of Fame

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arship to Fairfield University where he hit .300, .320, and .380 over three seasons with Stags.

After college, he organized a slow pitch softball team in 1964 that won seven state tournaments, seven New England regional titles, and finished fourth at the national tournament in 1967.

"We were big-time," Lorenzo said. "We even scheduled teams from Pittsburgh and Detroit in Meriden at Ceppa Field. We had to fly them in and all that, but we had a great sponsor with a construction company in Meriden-Chadwick Construction that was later called Twin Cities Construction. We had the finances, and we raised a lot of money ourselves. It was quite a big part of my life."

Lorenzo was the player-coach for that softball team, and that launched his next career in coaching. Soon, he was approached as a teacher in South End School to coach the fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in a town league.

He transferred to Kennedy Junior High School to work with the older kids, and went on to coach at the high school level and college level with St. Thomas Seminary, Mattatuck Community College, Simsbury, and Wesleyan before ending his career at Southington High School from

Dick Lorenzo could take five children from a kindergarten class and in a short space of time take them to the finals of the state tournament—maybe even make them an NBA franchise.

Jim Senich,
Former *Observer* sports writer

1984-1991.

After patching together a haphazard team in Simsbury and rallying for 24 consecutive wins. Jim Senich, the *Observer's* sports writer at the time, said, "Dick Lorenzo could take five children from a kindergarten class and in a short space of time take them to the finals of the state tournament—maybe even make them an NBA franchise."

Lorenzo became known for getting the most out of his talent—the same praise he received as a player. He remembers two teams at St. Thomas Seminary, a four-year school with a total enrollment of

fewer than 75 students destined for the priesthood. Lorenzo marshaled them to an 18-2 record in back-to-back seasons in 1977 and 1978.

"The first one averaged about 70 or 75 points per game. They were a fast breaking team in a small gym. We still won 18 games with the second one, but we only averaged about 43 points per game. We were a slow-it-down team," he said. "We had to be methodical with every pass because we didn't have the talent we had the previous year. Those kids accepted what we had to do to be successful and win."

When Lorenzo finally retired

from coaching, his teams had amassed a 216-138 record. "I don't know that you'd call it 'tremendous,'" he said, "but it was a very good coaching career."

With his coaching and playing, Lorenzo was an obvious choice to represent the town in the first class of the Southington Sports Hall of Fame. On Wednesday, Nov. 10, he will be inducted in a ceremony at the Aqua Turf in Plantsville.

"I was very honored to be in this group of athletes and those coaches," he said. "Southington was a big part of my life, and sports were a big part, too. To be inaugurated into this first class is something that is very special. These athletes that have been chosen? I watched them. I watched these greats when they played, and that helped me. I would watch those older guys, and I would pick up things that would suit me. Those coaches were phenomenal. They made Southington what it is as a sports town."

For tickets, contact Jim Verderame, (860) 628-7335, or buy them in person at Bonterra Italian Bistro, Anthony Jacks Wood Fired Grill, or the Southington Chamber of Commerce.

To comment on this story or to contact sports writer John Goralski, email him at jgoralski@southingtonobserver.com.



SUBMITTED

Dick Lorenzo collected nearly 1,000 points (927) in three seasons at Southington High School.

Jack Zilly: Southington's first inductee to the hall of fame

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lives. It was just like today's Super Bowl, but they didn't have all the hype. And the money definitely wasn't the same."

Once his playing days ended, Zilly was far from finished. He returned to the college game, serving as an assistant at Montana State in 1955 before returning to Notre Dame as an assistant. His son, Pat, remembers his father for his commitment on and off the field.

"He tried to get the most out of every individual, and he wanted them to

play at 100 percent every game," he said. "But he always made sure that the student athletes got an education as well. That was always the most important thing for him. He wanted them to come out with an education, using football as a vehicle."

Despite his professional career and his off-season antics on the silver screen, Zilly was a quiet man at heart who shrank from the spotlight. He settled in Rhode Island after his coaching career finished, and few neighbors had any idea about his storied past.

They didn't even know he was in the NFL until reading his obituary in 2009. Zilly died at 88.

"If you were sitting in a crowd and talking about football, he wouldn't tell anybody that he played for the Rams or the Eagles," Pat Zilly said. "He wouldn't give a background history on himself because he wasn't that type of a person. When

people in the town of Narragansett read his obituary in the paper, they were shocked to find out what he had done."

As the first athlete to make the jump to the next level, it's no surprise that Zilly was selected in the first class of the Southington Sports Hall of Fame. On Wednesday, Nov. 10, he will be inducted in a

ceremony at the Aqua Turf in Plantsville.

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"He would have been very proud," said his son. "He was not the type of person that liked to be in

the limelight, but he knew what he did. He achieved everything on his own. It's not like today's athlete where they build you, basically. The athlete of yesterday versus the athlete of today is night and day."

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