

WPIAL HALL OF FAME AND COURAGE AWARD 2012 INDUCTEES

ATHLETES

SEAN MILLER, BLACKHAWK HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1987

One of the greatest point guards to ever play WPIAL basketball, Sean joins his father, John, as part of the 2012 Hall of Fame class. Sean finished his career with more than 1,700 points, and that was before the 3-point line was instituted. He led Blackhawk to the 1986 WPIAL championship. As a senior, he led the WPIAL in scoring at 27 points a game, shot better than 60 percent from the field, better than 90 percent from the free-throw line and also scored 51 points in one game. Following his high school career, his jersey was retired by Blackhawk High school. He went on to a fine career at the University of Pittsburgh and is now a highly successful college coach at the University of Arizona. He has guided two teams to the NCAA Elite Eight – Xavier and Arizona.

NEIL WALKER, PINE-RICHLAND HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2004

You know him as the second baseman for the Pittsburgh Pirates, but Neil Walker also was one of the WPIAL's best all-around athletes during his days at Pine-Richland. His friends jokingly nicknamed him "God" at Pine-Richland, and he did everything but walk on water for the Rams. He is one of the few WPIAL athletes to win the Post-Gazette Athlete of the Year twice. Walker's No. 1 sport was undoubtedly baseball as he hit .504 in four years as a starter, with 32 home runs and 102 RBIs. He was terrific as a senior with a .657 average, 13 home runs, 42 RBIs and a 1.403 slugging percentage. In 2004, he was the first WPIAL player to be taken in the first round of the Major League Baseball in 26 years. But Walker also was an outstanding receiver in football, twice being named to the PG's Fabulous 22 and having some Division I college scholarship offers for football. On top of that, he was an all-section pick as a junior in basketball.

JESS STROM, STEEL VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2001

Whether it was basketball or soccer, Strom found the net with uncanny regularity. Strom was an outstanding guard in basketball and finished her career at Steel Valley as one of the top scorers in WPIAL history with 2,840 points. She scored 46 in one game and was a Post-Gazette Fabulous 5 selection as a junior and senior. In soccer, she had no peers, as her career mark of 205 goals is still a WPIAL record today. Strom went on to have a terrific basketball career at Penn State, where she was a three-time all-Big Ten Conference selection. She is one of only four players in Penn State history to have 1,000 career points and 750 career assists. She is now coaching women's basketball at California University of Pa.

RON SEPIC, UNIONTOWN HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1963

How many former athletes can say they were drafted in the NFL and the NBA? Ron Sepic can make the claim. He is one of only 12 players from the WPIAL or Pittsburgh City League to ever be named to the prestigious Parade All-American basketball team. In 1963, he and the other four All-Americans appeared on the famous "Ed Sullivan Show." One of the other four was Lew Alcindor. After starring at Uniontown High in football and basketball, he went on to play basketball at Ohio State. The Cincinnati Royals drafted him for basketball. Although Sepic didn't play football at Ohio State, the Washington Redskins of the NFL drafted him. At Uniontown, Sepic was an all-state selection in football AND basketball. He won a WPIAL title in football, and WPIAL and PIAA titles in basketball.

FRANK FUHRER III, FOX CHAPEL HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1976

The name Fuhrer is synonymous with Western Pennsylvania golf, and to be frank, this man is one of the greatest golfers in the history of the WPIAL. Fuhrer is one of only two individuals to win three WPIAL golf championships. Fuhrer won gold in 1974, '75 and '76 and also won a state championship in 1976. After high school, Fuhrer had a distinguished career for the North Carolina Tar Heels, where he was a NCAA honorable mention All-American twice and a second-team All-American in 1980. He also was a three-time, first-team all-ACC selection. At one time in 1981, he was ranked the No. 2 amateur in the country by Golf Digest magazine and played in the U.S. Open and Masters tournaments in 1982.

KELLY KOVACH, BALDWIN HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1991

Kovach had a "golden" career at Baldwin. She was a four-year starter in softball and basketball, and a three-year starter in volleyball. The Post-Gazette Athlete of the Year in 1991, Kovach was the ace pitcher on three consecutive WPIAL championship softball teams. She was also a member of volleyball teams that won two WPIAL and two state titles. Her most dominating sport was softball, where she had a 53-5 career record with a 0.48 ERA, and a .463 career batting average. She went on to become an All-American pitcher at the University of Michigan and was a two-time Big Ten Conference pitcher of the year. Kelly is currently the head softball coach at Miami University of Ohio.

MEL NASH, GATEWAY CLASS OF 1972

Nash made a splash in his days as a swimmer. In 1972, he was named the national high school swimmer of the year by Swimming World Magazine. Nash had an unforgettable career at Gateway, setting numerous state and WPIAL records. He never lost an individual race from his sophomore season on. At one time in 1971, he was ranked third in the world in the 100-meter backstroke and, at age 16, he won a gold medal at the Pan-Am Games. After high school, Nash went on to become an All-American during all four years he swam for the Indiana University Hoosiers. He won a bronze medal at the 1975 World Championships and also placed fifth in the 100-meter backstroke at the 1976 Olympic Trials, missing a spot on the U.S. team by .16 second. He went on to coach the Texas A & M men's' and women's teams.

DEREK BOCHNA, MAPLETOWN HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1990

Derek Bochna brought Division I college football recruiters to tiny Mapletown High School a few decades ago. Bochna was an outstanding running back-defensive back and when he finished his career at Mapletown, he was the WPIAL's all-time leading rusher with 4,793 yards. He scored 74 touchdowns in his career and was a four-year starter. But Bochna also excelled in baseball and basketball at Mapletown before going on to play defensive back for the Penn State football team. He was a four-year letterman at Penn State and finished his career fourth on the school's all-time list for interceptions. But Bochna also played four seasons of baseball at Penn State and was the school's all-time leader in home runs with 28 when he graduated. Most recently, Bochna has been a high school football coach at McGuffey in the WPIAL.

ROBERT "RED" WORRELL, CENTERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1957 HERITAGE AWARDEE

One of the greatest athletes in the history of Washington County, Worrell was a four-year starter in football, basketball, baseball and track at Centerville High School (now part of Beth-Center). His athletic ability was legendary, rushing for more than 3,000 yards in football and was a WPIAL player of the year as a junior and senior. He graduated from Centerville in 1957 and went to Penn State, where he was a star running back on the freshman team (freshmen weren't eligible for the varsity back then). He died tragically at the age of 19 in an accident at his home. Joe Paterno, an assistant coach when Worrell played at Penn State, once said Red was "one of the best football players we ever had around here." Every spring at Penn State's Blue-White game, one player receives the "Red Worrell Award" for exemplary conduct, loyalty, interest, attitude and improvement.

COACHES

JOHN MILLER BASKETBALL - BLACKHAWK HIGH SCHOOL

When the subject is greatest coaches in the WPIAL in any sport, Miller is in the conversation. Before retiring in 2005, Miller took the Blackhawk program to unprecedented heights. In 29 seasons at Blackhawk, he won eight WPIAL titles, second only to the great Ed McCluskey of Farrell. Miller also won four state championships, which ties him for second-most among WPIAL coaches, and his 1992 team is considered one of the WPIAL's best in recent history. At Blackhawk, Miller had a 583-222 record and also guided the team to a WPIAL record 111 consecutive section wins from 1990-99. Miller, a former player at Moon High School, coached a number of Division I college players, including his sons, Sean and Archie. He also coached Riverside for six seasons before coming to Blackhawk, and his all-time record is 657-280.

CHUCK WAGNER FOOTBALL—OAKMONT, RIVERVIEW, FOX CHAPEL, SPRINGDALE HIGH SCHOOLS

This man is known for his favorite saying “Hang in there tough.” When it came to coaching, he hung in a long time. Counting three years as an assistant coach at Bucknell, Wagner coached football for 50 years – and 47 were as a high school head coach in the WPIAL. He coached Oakmont (his alma mater) for 10 seasons (1961-70), Riverview for 15 (1971-85) and Fox Chapel for three (1988-90). He finished his career with 19 seasons at Springdale (1993-2011), where he took the WPIAL's worst program and turned it into a WPIAL champion in 2003. He stepped down as coach after last season. Springdale also qualified for the playoffs in each of his final 10 seasons. Wagner finished his career fourth on the WPIAL all-time list for victories with a record of 270-202-11.

ANDY URBANIC FOOTBALL – PENN HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

The word “dynasty” was associated with Penn Hills High School football in the 1970s. From 1973 through 1980, Urbanic's Penn Hills teams had an 84-8-1 record and he won four consecutive WPIAL championships at one point (including one co-championship). From 1975 to 1977, Penn Hills had a 28-game winning streak, which is still sixth-best in the history of the WPIAL. He coached at Penn Hills from 1968-80 and had an impressive 110-30-2 record. Before Penn Hills, he also coached out of state and his 21-year record was 164-53-4. He went on to be an assistant coach at Pitt and Akron. He is currently the Associate Athletic Director for Football Operations at Florida State University.

CONTRIBUTOR

BOB BLEGGI

For more than four decades, since 1969, Bleggi has served the WPIAL as a member of the Cross Country/Track program. Since 1991, he has served as chairman of the committee. He has been instrumental in bringing WPIAL track program into the 21st century. As a result of his efforts, the WPIAL has a combined AA/AAA final and a fully automated timing system at the WPIAL qualifiers and finals. He was a leader in the early years of girls track and was instrumental in developing the girls program on an even footing with boys track. A stellar athlete at New Castle High School and Westminster College, he is a member of the Lawrence County Sports Hall of Fame and a member of the All-Time New Castle High School Football Team. At Neshannock High School, Bleggi had a distinguished career as Head football coach, head track coach and athletic director. The school's football stadium bears his name.

CONTEST OFFICIAL

ZIGMUND “RED” MIHALIK BASKETBALL, FOOTBALL

How much of an impact did Mihalik have on basketball? Enough to be enshrined into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame in 1986. Mihalik, a former player at Ford City High School, played professional basketball in leagues that preceded the NBA. From there, he went on to a highly-distinguished career as a basketball official, working six NCAA finals, two NIT finals and three NAIA finals. He also officiated in two Olympic Games. He got his start by officiating in high school, and worked nine WPIAL finals and five state championships. In 1951, one publication named him the best official in the country. Ford City’s gym is named “Red Mihalik Gym.”

TEAMS

UPPER ST. CLAIR FOOTBALL 1989

The first team from the WPIAL to go 15-0 and win the state Quad-A title. The Panthers dominated the competition and finished the 1989 season ranked No. 4 in the country by USA Today. An example of Upper St. Clair’s dominance was in the WPIAL playoffs when it won three games by a score of 85-20. Under legendary coach Jim Render, the team had a tremendous running game, led by backs Doug Whaley and Pete Habib, a star lineman in Phil Dunn and a future major-league baseball player in defensive back Kevin Orié. In the state title game, the Panthers defense was superb in beating Wilson, 12-7. Wilson featured future NFL quarterback Kerry Collins.

FARRELL BASKETBALL 1960

The Farrell Steelers had many great basketball teams during Ed McCluskey’s reign as coach, but this was a one-of-a-kind team. It featured some all-time greats from the WPIAL, including Willie Somerset and Brian Generalovich. Never mind statistics. This tells you how good the team was: Three players from the ‘60 Farrell team were eventually drafted into the NBA – Somerset, Generalovich and Jack Marin, who was a sophomore reserve on this team. Farrell finished 30-1, won WPIAL and state championships, and the Steelers’ average margin of victory for the season was 19 points. In the postseason, Farrell outscored opponents by an average of 14 a game and won the state title with a 60-41 win.

COURAGE AWARD

SARA AND MARK PILARSKI

As students at Hampton High School, Mark and Sara Pilarski, are outstanding players on their respective basketball teams and excel in the classroom with grade-point averages above 4.0. Their accomplishments are significant considering the brother and sister both suffer from serious medical problems. Mark, a senior center, battles Stephen Johnson Syndrome, a potentially deadly skin disease that attacks the mucous membranes and causes skin to peel off in sheets. His sister, Sara, a junior forward, has a brain tumor that doctors determined is benign but causes debilitating headaches and lost vision at times. Despite their hardships, Sara and Mark continued to play through the pain to lead their teams to successful seasons. Both wear the same number, 50, as their way to keep the other nearby.