

# **WPIAL Hall of Fame**

## **2019 Bios**

## **George Anderson – Contributor**

When George Anderson signed on as a member of the WPIAL's soccer committee, there were only 8 sanctioned teams in the entire District. At that time, the WPIAL champion was determined by season record; there were no playoffs. Then WPIAL Executive Director and fellow hall of fame inductee Charles "Ace" Heberling worked with Anderson and a two-person committee to initiate a playoff system and entice more member schools to begin soccer programs. George became the WPIAL's Soccer Chairman in 1975 and held the position through the 1999 school year. After he retired, he became an adjunct member of the committee. In all, Anderson either led the committee or served in some capacity from 1967 through 2017. He also contributed on the statewide level serving as the state soccer representative to the PIAA. In his capacity on the WPIAL Soccer Committee, Anderson helped institute the sudden death rules and was a champion for girls' soccer and girls' games during the fall. His greatest contribution was growing the game and the number of boys' soccer teams from 8, when he began, to 108. Anderson coached the boys' soccer team at Chartiers Valley High School where, for 35 years, he served as an educator.

## **Charlie Batch - Athlete**

Charlie Batch was a starting quarterback at every level of football; high school, college, and pro, but fans of the Pittsburgh Steelers will forever remember him as an able back-up who kept their playoff hopes alive with a game-winning drive against the eventual Super Bowl champion Baltimore Ravens. In what would be his last NFL start, Batch completed 25 of 36 passes for 276 yards. A two-year starter for Steel Valley High School in 1990 and 1991, Charlie led the Ironmen to a number one ranking and the WPIAL Class AA semifinals during his senior season. He was no stranger to comebacks even then. Trailing 21-0 and then 34-21 with two minutes left against Beth-Center, Batch led the Ironmen on an amazing rally that included the game-winning touchdown pass to Rick Walker with 17 seconds left. Fans said it may have been one of the best wins in school history up until that time. Batch went on to star at Eastern Michigan University, where he was named First Team All-Mid-America Conference in 1995, before being drafted in the second round by the NFL's Detroit Lions where he started for the better parts of the 1998 through 2001 seasons. He passed for over 2,000 yards in three of his four campaigns with the Lions. In 2002, the Homestead native signed with the Steelers and enjoyed 11 more years in the NFL winning rings in Pittsburgh's Super Bowl XL and XLIII victories. Batch retired having thrown 61 career touchdown passes. His tenure as a Pittsburgh quarterback was second only to Terry Bradshaw. Ben Roethlisberger has since moved into that spot. Today, Charlie serves as a studio analyst on the NFL Network, the Steeler Radio Network, and KDKA-TV and he works in the booth during Pittsburgh's preseason telecasts. Previously, he did color on WPIAL games on both the Champs Sports Network and the xfinity High School Game of the Week on Comcast. Away from football, Charlie dedicates himself to his Best of the Batch Foundation, a non-profit organization devoted to improving the lives of children and families in distressed communities by building character, self-esteem, and appreciation for education. Among the awards he has won for his humanitarian accomplishments are the first Jerome Bettis Award for Humanity and Community Service in 2006 and the 2012 "Whizzer" White NFL Man of the Year Award.

## **Larry Bruno - Heritage**

As a player, he was a rugged, hard-running fullback. Even so, Larry Bruno is best known for the impression he made on the high school football players in his charge at both Monaca and Beaver Falls. A standout in both basketball and football at St. Aloysius grade school and for the Potters at East Liverpool High School in Ohio, Bruno crossed the state line to attend Geneva College where he lettered in both sports. His education was interrupted by World War II. He served in the South Pacific at Guadalcanal. Upon being discharged, Larry returned to "College Hill" where he was named First Team All-State in 1946, Honorable Mention All-America, and Second Team Little All-American. He played in the 1947 East-West Shrine Game in San Francisco then was drafted by the Los Angeles Dons and Pittsburgh Steelers. Despite signing with the black and gold, Bruno played one season of semi-pro ball, then gave it up to accept a more lucrative position as a high school teacher and coach. At Monaca, Larry began his head coaching career at the junior high level with the football and basketball teams in 1947. One year later, he was elevated to varsity coach in both sports. Under Coach Bruno, Monaca's basketball teams won three section titles and 160 games, dropping 60. In football, the Indians went 52-33-6 in his 11 campaigns. He landed the job as Head Football Coach at Beaver Falls beginning with the 1959 season and led the Fighting Tigers to a record of 148-50-10. Along the way, his 1960 team, quarterbacked by Joe Namath, went 10-0 and was crowned WPIAL Class AA Champion. The 1961 "Fallsmen" were again perfect in 10 games, but did not qualify for the playoffs under the Gardner Points System. Larry's last squad advanced to, but fell in, the 1978 WPIAL Championship Game and finished 11-1. Like the amateur magician he was, Coach Bruno's teams were known for their innovative and deceptive style of play. After his retirement, Larry served as Namath's presenter at his Pro Football Hall of Fame induction and continued to attract many of the nation's top college and high school coaches, along with hundreds of local players, to his annual Larry Bruno Football Camp. Founded after his passing, the Larry Bruno Foundation continues to expand its Hall of Achievement and History Center located in the Carnegie Free Library of Beaver Falls, and provides scholarships and offerings to students for their academic and athletic achievements.

## Sean Casey - Athlete

Sean Casey got the first hit, belted the first homer (a two-run shot into Section 142 in the first inning), and drove in the first RBI ever at PNC Park; a tremendously memorable four-hit, five-RBI outing for a local kid from Upper Saint Clair. The trouble is Casey was playing for the visiting Cincinnati Reds who spoiled the Pirates' inaugural game in their new North Shore ballpark. Even more amazing, three days earlier he ripped the first-ever hit at Miller Park in Milwaukee making him the first big league player ever to have the first hit in two newly-opened parks in the same season. In a career that spanned 12 seasons, Sean also played first base for the Cleveland Indians, Detroit Tigers, Boston Red Sox, and his hometown Pittsburgh Pirates. Nicknamed, "The Mayor", he was not only voted "the friendliest player in baseball" by his peers in a 2007 *Sports Illustrated* poll, Casey batted over .300 six times and was selected to play in the 1999, 2001 and 2004 Major League Baseball All-Star games. In 1999 with the Reds, he hit .332 with 25 homers, 99 RBI's and 42 doubles. For the Tigers in the 2006 World Series, Casey hit a smoking .529 with 2 home runs and 5 RBI. You can trace his success back to high school when he helped lead the Upper Saint Clair Panthers to the 1992 WPIAL Class AAAA Baseball crown. As a junior, he hit .516 with 31 runs batted in. He followed that up a season later by batting .419 with a school record 14 doubles and 33 RBI. That earned Sean a scholarship to the University of Richmond where he led the NCAA with a .461 batting average. He is still active in baseball through broadcasting and his philanthropic efforts. Casey works as an analyst with the MLB Network, is the founder of Casey's Clubhouse and the Miracle League of the South Hills which strives to enrich the community through compassion, love, and baseball. That is where you will often find Sean announcing games, pitching to kids, and showing off that lefty swing.

## **Bruce Gradkowski - Athlete**

Bruce Gradkowski is one of the top passers in WPIAL history. As a junior quarterback at Seton-LaSalle High School, he threw for 1,630 yards and 10 touchdowns. During his senior campaign, Gradkowski completed 188-of-327 passes (57.5%) and threw for a then-WPIAL record of 2,978 yards and 30 touchdowns, surpassing marks set previously by Central Catholic's Dan Marino. Bruce also excelled in basketball, starting at point guard for three seasons and leading the Rebels in scoring. At the University of Toledo, he became the starting QB as a sophomore in 2003, setting a Mid-American Conference season record by completing 71.2% of his passes while throwing for 3,210 yards and a Rockets' season mark of 29 touchdowns with a passer rating of 161.53. He also rushed for 504 yards and one TD picking up 5.5 yards per clip. In 2004, Bruce passed for 3,518 yards with 27 touchdowns, the Rockets won the MAC Championship, and Gradkowski was named the game's Most Valuable Player. During his senior season in 2005, he again threw for 29 scores and was named MVP in the GMAC Bowl. In the 2006 NFL Draft, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers took Gradkowski in the sixth round (194th overall). He became the Bucs' starter in Week 5 and finished his rookie season with 1,661 yards and nine touchdowns. Waived by the Bucs prior to the 2008 season, and he was claimed by the St. Louis Rams. He signed with Cleveland that following December and started in the Browns' game against the Steelers. The Raiders picked him up in 2009 and, in his first start, Gradkowski threw two touchdowns and brought Oakland from behind in a 20-17 victory over the heavily-favored Cincinnati Bengals. In a Week 13 road game, the Raiders won 27-24 in Pittsburgh as Bruce completed 20-of-33 passes for 308 yards and three TD's including an 11-yard game-winning toss to Louis Murphy. For that performance, Gradkowski was named the AFC Offensive Player of the Week. Battling injury, Gradkowski remained with Oakland for the better part of two more seasons until he signed a two-year deal with Cincinnati. Subbing for an injured Andy Dalton in a game against Cleveland, Bruce slyly threw a touchdown on a quick snap as the Browns were still in their huddle. On March 13, 2013, Gradkowski was inked to a three-year contract by the Steelers and served as Ben Roethlisberger's back-up through part of the Steelers' 2016 campaign. In 2017, Gradkowski became a volunteer assistant quarterbacks coach at Anthony Wayne High School in Whitehouse, Ohio and also joined the University of Toledo's Rocket Football Radio Network as a color analyst.

## **Joe Hardiman – Official**

Joseph M. Hardiman III has been a registered Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association official since the 1974-75 season. Between 1977 and 1980, he transferred his registration to work games in the State of Ohio. After that, he returned to the Keystone state and resumed officiating baseball, softball, basketball, and volleyball. During his time wearing the striped shirt, Hardiman has held a number of positions within the different various PIAA chapters of which he is a member. Currently, Joe serves as the WPIAL and PIAA District 8 volleyball rules interpreter. It is a post he has held for over 20 years. Beginning in 1981, Hardiman has consistently been selected to work WPIAL, Pittsburgh City League, and PIAA inner-district volleyball tournaments. He also officiated both the boys and girls WPIAL, District 8, and PIAA finals over the years. Joe also continues to serve as a collegiate volleyball official and has enjoyed a stellar career at both levels of the game.

## **Billy Knight – Athlete**

During what many describe as the “golden era” of high school basketball in Pittsburgh, Billy Knight was a versatile 6-foot-6 guard/forward combo who had one of the greatest playoff games in WPIAL history. In the 1970 Class A quarterfinals, Knight was nearly unstoppable, scoring 41 points and pulling down 21 rebounds. That performance is still tied for sixth-best in a WPIAL playoff game. His Braddock High School squad fell to Mohawk in the semifinals three days later in front of more than 9,000 fans at the Civic Arena. Billy was high man in that one, scoring 30 points and grabbing 29 boards. Knight left Braddock for the University of Pittsburgh and enjoyed a sensational career in Oakland. He was named All-American and became the first Panther in school history to average more than 20 points and 10 rebounds over three different seasons. In 1974, Billy led Pitt to a 25-4 record and the NCAA Tournament’s Elite Eight where the Panthers fell to eventual national champion North Carolina State. He is considered to be one of Pitt’s greatest players ever; named to the Panthers all-time starting five. Knight began his pro career with Indiana, earning ABA All-Rookie First Team honors for the 1975-76 campaign during which he averaged 28.1 points per game. He continued with the Pacers as they were merged into the NBA and his average climbed to 26.6; second best in the league that season. After stints with the Buffalo Braves, Boston Celtics, Kansas City Kings, and San Antonio Spurs, Knight returned to Indy before finishing his playing career with a season in France. He is still the Pacers’ third all-time leading scorer and is in the top five of several other all-time categories for the franchise. After stepping off the court, he moved into the front office becoming an executive with the Pacers and the Vancouver/Memphis Grizzlies. From 2003 to 2008, he served as the Executive Vice President and General Manager of the Atlanta Hawks. In 1989, Pitt retired his number 34.



## **Sean Lee - Athlete**

One of the most cerebral linebackers in the National Football League today, Sean Lee learned his craft at Upper Saint Clair High School. He was a star in football and basketball who earned seven varsity letters and one of the rare athletes to have been named to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and Tribune Review Fabulous 22 Football and Fab-Five Basketball teams. In his final football season at USC, Lee rushed for 1,240 yards and 21 touchdowns while registering 95 tackles and four interceptions as a safety on a team that went 11-1. A three-year starter and tenacious defender, Sean averaged over 21 points, 9 rebounds, and 3 assists per game in guiding the Panthers to the 2005 WPIAL Basketball Championship during his senior season. He earned 2005 Post-Gazette, Tribune-Review and Almanac High School Athlete of the Year accolades. Recruited heavily, Sean chose to attend Penn State University to play football where he was a four-year letterman and three-year starter at linebacker. He also captained the Nittany Lions for two seasons. With Lee at linebacker, the Nittany Lions won bowl games in each of his four seasons. Sean was named the Most Valuable Player at the Alamo Bowl and the Big Ten Player of the Week three times. In 2007, he was selected to the Pro Football Weekly All-American First Team and even though hampered by injury, Lee was twice named Second Team All-Big Ten. When he finished his collegiate career, Sean was Penn State's fourth all-time leading tackler. In 2010, he was taken in the second round, the 55th player chosen, in the NFL Draft. Lee has spent his entire pro career with the Dallas Cowboys. He was named to the Pro Bowl in back-to-back seasons in 2015 and 2016, and he was selected First Team All-Pro in 2016 when he made 135 tackles. Sean supports two different charities. The Boys & Girls Clubs started off as Legends for Literacy with the purchase of tablets with reading programs and sports courts, and PMR Charities which helps people who have issues paying their medical bills.

## **Stephanie Madia – Athlete**

One of the top distance runners in WPIAL history, Stephanie was a three-time PIAA champion. On the statewide level, she won individual gold in the 1600 meters in 2001, and as a member of the Cross Country championship team and individually in the 3200 meter run in 2002. At the WPIAL finals, Madia won the 3200 Meter Run in 2000....the 1600 Meter Run in 2001.....and both the 1600 and 3200 Meter runs in 2002. The cross country teams, which she led, were crowned WPIAL champs in 2000, 2001, and 2002. In addition, Stephanie was ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> at the 2001 Foot Locker National Championships. Her list of honors is as long as her list of championship titles. She was named All-WPIAL and All-PIAA in each of her four years of high school. Stephanie was a two-time Pittsburgh Tribune-Review Athlete of the Year, in 2001 and 2002. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette awarded her that same title in 2002. Nationally, she was named as one of Harrier's Top 50 High School Girls' Distance Runners in 2001. Madia earned a scholarship to the University of Notre Dame where she captained the Fighting Irish Track and Cross Country teams. She was a four-time All-American; twice in Track and twice in Cross Country. Plus, she was a two-time Academic All-American. During her senior season, Stephanie placed fifth in the 5,000 meter run at the NCAA Division I Championships. Madia won the Kanaley Award for leadership among student athletes. She also earned an MBA from Carnegie Mellon University in Finance and Quantitative Strategy.

## **Guy Montecalvo - Coach**

Guy Montecalvo won WPIAL football titles as both an athlete and a coach at Washington High School. He was a three-year starter at tailback and defensive back and held the Little Prexies' school record for career rushing until 2009 WPIAL Hall of Fame inductee Brian Davis broke it. Guy earned All-WPIAL and All-State honors and was selected to play in the Big 33 Game in 1973. Montecalvo also won three WPIAL titles and one PIAA gold medal as a sprinter on Wash Hi's track team. As a sophomore, the Prexies' 880-yard relay team won the WPIAL title and placed second in the PIAA. As a junior, Guy placed second in the WPIAL in the 220-yard dash and Washington's 880 relay team also placed second. As a senior, he won the 220-yard dash and set a WPIAL record, placed second in the 100-yard dash final, and his 880 relay team finished as WPIAL champions. Montecalvo was crowned WPIAL Track's Most Valuable Performer in his senior year. He earned a football scholarship from Penn State, but four knee surgeries put an end to his playing career. He became Washington's football coach in 1980 and compiled a 192-71-2 record in 23 seasons. The Little Prexies won the 1993 and 2001 WPIAL titles and finished in the finals in 1990, 1995, 1998, and 1999 during his tenure. The 2001 campaign was his finest as Washington went a perfect 15-0 and won WPIAL and PIAA championships. Montecalvo also served as head coach of both the boys and girls track teams at Washington for 13 years. His girls' team captured the WPIAL and PIAA titles in 1996, while his boys' team won the 1998 WPIAL crown. 24 members of his quads earned WPIAL gold. Guy later coached football at Canon-McMillan High School for seven seasons and finished his career with a 225-107-2 record. Montecalvo also served the Big Macs as Athletic Director and, in 2014, was named Pennsylvania's Athletic Director of the Year.

## **Paul Posluszny – Athlete**

Paul Posluszny capped an outstanding prep career by leading Hopewell High School to a 14-1 mark and WPIAL and PIAA football crowns. As a senior, the rugged linebacker and running back rushed for 1,573 yards and 15 touchdowns. In the Vikings' 20-15 WPIAL championship game victory over previously unbeaten Pine-Richland, Posluszny accounted for 92 yards and a score. He broke Perry Traditional Academy's 13-game shutout streak with a 7-yard touchdown run in the first quarter of a 20-3 victory in the PIAA semifinals and finished the game with 121 yards on the ground. In the state championship match versus Strath Haven, Posluszny scored a touchdown and accounted for 167 of the Vikings' 304 rushing yards in Hopewell's 21-10 victory. Paul was named to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's Fabulous 22 and Tribune-Review's Terrific 25 and received Player of the Year honors from both publications and from the Pittsburgh Athletic Association. He was named Associated Press All-State. Posluszny then went on to Penn State where he rewrote many of the Nittany Lions' defensive records. In his first season, he earned *The Sporting News* Big Ten All-Freshman honors. In 2004, Paul started 11 games, led the Nittany Lions with 104 tackles, and garnered All-Big Ten Second-Team and conference Academic honors. In 2005, Posluszny became Penn State's first junior captain in 37 years and posted 116 tackles including 14 for loss and four sacks. He had a 22 tackle game against Northwestern. Penn State won the Orange Bowl and Paul joined LaVar Arrington as the second Penn State player to win both the Chuck Bednarik and Dick Butkus awards as the College Defensive Player and Linebacker of the Year respectively. During Paul's senior year, he registered 116 tackles, taking his career total to a then-school record 372 tackles. He is the first Penn State linebacker to be a two-time AP All-American. Additionally, Posluszny is a two-time *ESPN The Magazine* Academic All-American and the 2006 Academic All-American of the Year. The Buffalo Bills selected Posluszny in the second round (34th overall) of the 2007 NFL Draft and he immediately became their starting middle linebacker. He signed with Jacksonville Jaguars in 2011, and completed his 11-year NFL career following the Jaguars playoff run in 2018. In a 45-42 postseason win against the Steelers, Posluszny made three combined tackles and deflected a pass. In his pro career, Paul had 1,381 tackles, 41 pass breakups, 16 sacks, 15 interceptions and eight forced fumbles.

## **Jim Render – Coach**

Before jumping into the battle that is Friday night football in Western Pennsylvania, Jim Render began his head coaching career in Carrollton, Ohio in 1970. Nearly half a century later, he proudly walked away from the game as the WPIAL's winningest all-time head coach. First, he reached landmark win number 400 in August 2018 when his Panthers topped neighboring Peters Township becoming just the 29<sup>th</sup> coach in America to reach that milestone. Then, Render called it a career following his 49<sup>th</sup> campaign having rolled up 406 victories; the lion's share at powerhouse Upper Saint Clair High School. Along the way came the 1989 and 2006 PIAA state football championships, five WPIAL titles, six more league championship game appearances, 23 conference titles, and 38 playoff appearances all at USC since 1979. His combined record of 406-141-6 between Carrollton, Uniontown (where he guided the Red Raiders for seven seasons), and Upper Saint Clair places Jim 25<sup>th</sup> on the national all-time list. He has enjoyed one of the most distinguished and successful careers of any coach in any sport in WPIAL history while turning the Panthers into one of the most respected high school football programs in the country. In his playing days, he was the team captain and a 1959 All-Ohio quarterback at Dover High School. After starting his collegiate career at Northwestern, Jim graduated from Wittenberg University and played on their 1962 and 1963 National Championship football teams. He set school and Ohio Conference records as a place-kicker. After graduation, he became an assistant at Stanton Local High School then at East Liverpool High School in Ohio, simultaneously earning his Master's degree in Administration at West Virginia University. Coach Render is already a member of the Pennsylvania Scholastic Football Coaches Hall of Fame, the Western Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame and he has been recognized with the Lou Holtz Upper Ohio Valley Hall of Fame Lifetime Achievement Award.

## **Gary Tranquill – Athlete**

Gary Tranquill had an outstanding athletic career at Avella High School. He was a four-year football letterman who, as a senior, helped lead the Eagles to a share of the WPIAL Class B title. Tranquill played quarterback from 1958 through 1961 at Wittenberg University, where he was named Little All-American as a senior. He won the Mike E. Gregory Award as the top offensive back in the Ohio Athletic Conference. Gary also lettered in baseball in college. After stints as an assistant at his alma mater, then Ball State, Bowling Green, Navy, Ohio State, and West Virginia, Tranquill was named the 32<sup>nd</sup> head coach at the United States Naval Academy in 1982 and led the Midshipmen through the 1986 campaign. His first season was his best as Navy went 6-5. Through his tenure, the Middies went 20-34-1. He then went to work as Offensive Coordinator under another former Navy head coach, George Welsh, at the University of Virginia. The Cavaliers attained a #1 ranking in 1990 bolstered by Gary's potent offense. He served as quarterbacks coach with the Cleveland Browns from 1991 to 1993 but returned to the college ranks at Virginia Tech, Michigan State, Virginia again, then North Carolina. Along the way, he worked closely with and mentored current University of Alabama coach Nick Saban, who was Tranquill's defensive backs coach at Navy in 1982. They also worked together at West Virginia, Michigan State, and with the Browns under then head coach Bill Belichick. Gary stepped out of retirement to become the quarterbacks coach of the Rhein Fire of NFL Europa for one season. In 2009, he was invited to join the staff at Boston College to serve as offensive coordinator and coach the QB's. He was inducted into the Wittenberg University Athletics Hall of Honor in 1986, and the Washington-Greene Chapter of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame in 1993.

## **John Woodruff - Heritage**

John Woodruff is one of the most daring middle-distance track stars in history. The first time he ran in a scholastic competition, he won both the 880-yard and mile runs. Before Woodruff graduated from Connellsville High School in 1935, he set new school, county, WPIAL, and PIAA marks, plus broke the national school mile record with a 4:23.4 winning time. His crowning achievement came in the 1936 Summer Olympic Games in Berlin where he took gold in the 800 meter event. A 21 year old freshman at the University of Pittsburgh, Woodruff placed second at the National AAU meet and first at the Olympic Trials with a time of 1:49.9 (a tenth of a second shy of the then-world record). In one of the most exciting races in Olympic history, Canadian Phil Edwards set an extremely slow pace with Woodruff boxed and trapped inside by the other runners. Knowing he had to break loose, John instantly decided to come to a stop. The move allowed the pack to run around him. At 6' 3" with a stride of almost 9 feet, "Long John" Woodruff sprinted to the front but lost the lead on the backstretch. He regained it on the final turn to win the gold. John also won the 1937 AAU title in the 800 and both the 400 and 800 IC4A titles in 1937, 1938 and 1939. He and his mates on the national team set the world 4×880 yard relay record. He graduated from Pitt in 1939 with a major in sociology, then earned his Masters from NYU in 1941. In a career curtailed by World War II, Woodruff entered military service in 1941 as a second lieutenant and was discharged as a Captain in 1945. He re-upped during the Korean War and left as a lieutenant colonel in 1957. Woodruff was the battalion commander of the 369th Artillery and later the 569 Transportation Battalion New York Army National Guard. While residing in New York and New Jersey, John coached young athletes and officiated at local and Madison Garden track meets. Woodruff worked as a teacher, special investigator for the Department of Welfare, recreation center director for the Police Athletic League, state parole officer, and salesperson in New York and an assistant director for a job corps center in New Jersey. He retired to Arizona in the 1990's and his final public appearance was in 2007 when he, along with members of the Tuskegee Airmen, were honored by throwing out the first pitch at a Diamondbacks baseball game. Today, the sapling from Germany's Black Forest he was given to commemorate his victory in Berlin is a massive oak tree that towers over the end zone at Connellsville's stadium. His hometown still holds the annual John Woodruff 5-K Run and Walk in his honor.

## **1979 North Hills High School Cross Country Team**

With one of the deepest rosters on any team in high school history locally, the 1979 North Hills High School Cross Country Team was unparalleled in running up 118 points in the PIAA state final; a full 80 points ahead of runner-up State College High School. In fact, no team could come close to North Hills that season. The Indians, guided by Head Coach John Wilkie, finished as the only undefeated team in Pennsylvania. They claimed the WPIAL team title by 70 points over Mount Lebanon, fueled by sophomore Tom Tobin's third place finish. Prior to that, North Hills won the Northern Qualifier by a whopping 56 points. The Indians shut out seven of its nine dual meet opponents that season and were crowned team champions at all eight invitational and championship races in which they competed with an average margin of victory of 48 points over the second place team. Despite State College having the number 3 and 9 finishers in their state championship meet, North Hills grabbed the gold as senior Mike Flynn finished 11<sup>th</sup>, junior Joe Cottone 23<sup>rd</sup>, seniors Calvin Biesecker 25<sup>th</sup> and Scott Shapert 28<sup>th</sup>, and junior Mike Cantway 31<sup>st</sup>. Sophomores Jeff Simmons and Tobin, who fell ill during the run, finished out of the scoring. Following the season, the Western Pennsylvania Track Council named Wilkie its High School Cross Country Coach of the Year.



## **1998 Rochester High School Football Team**

On a sunny December afternoon at Hersheypark Stadium, the 1998 Rochester Rams became the first Beaver County team to complete a season with a perfect 15-0 record by topping Southern Columbia 18-0 in the PIAA Class A championship game. In the state final, the Rams defense staggered the Tigers' vaunted Delaware Wing-T, holding it to 82 total yards on 33 rushing attempts. Through Rochester's PIAA Playoff run, the defense, led by future NFL player Kris Griffin and Rick Daman, allowed just 6 points. Even so, the most memorable game that season may have been the WPIAL title game, a classic in which the Rams beat cross-river-rival Monaca, 24-18, in overtime. Even though the two communities are separated only by a bridge spanning the Ohio, they took the battle for the WPIAL crown upstream to Three Rivers Stadium. The Rams outscored nine regular season and three WPIAL playoff opponents by an average of 29 points and did not have a game decided by fewer than 13 points until that day. At halftime, Monaca and Rochester were tied at 12. The Indians took an 18-12 lead midway through the third, but on the Rams' next possession, Rueben Jackson sprinted 61 yards to tie the score at 18-all. On that run, Jackson wrenched his back and could not return so Mookie Anderson carried the load through the fourth quarter and scored the game-winner in OT; a 6-yard run around right end that put "Rochoy" up 24-18. The defense preserved the victory when defensive back Dave Kindelberger intercepted an Indians' pass on a third and nine play. For the season, the Rams' offense put up some gaudy numbers on the ground. Jackson ran for 1,545 yards and 20 touchdowns, Anderson rushed for 1,038 yards and 20 more TD's, and Darrell Daman added 10 scores and 590 yards. Coach Dan Matsook was named Pennsylvania Small School Coach of the Year.

## **Ryan Michael Estatico – Courage Award**

Ryan Estatico was the number one singles player on Chartiers Valley High School's tennis team, a four-year varsity starter, and returning team captain. Ryan was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin Lymphoma in October 2018 and continues a regimen of chemotherapy treatments three days per week. It is expected that those intense sessions will be reduced to one per month soon, but doctors say they will continue through 2020. Despite the diagnosis and the harsh effects of the treatment, Estatico has amazingly been able to continue to perform for the Colts on days when he feels up to it. In fact, there have been several occasions when Ryan received a treatment in the morning and appeared in a match that same afternoon. He has displayed great stamina, although not at his previously level. Disappointed in not playing in his traditional top spot, Ryan, a selfless teammate and captain, put his squad above himself and has mostly played doubles since singles play in Chartiers Valley's section is so competitive. He's garnered a 4.7 grade point average and does volunteer work for the Saint Vincent DePaul Society. His school and community back him through the student support group, "Estat's Army", named for him and several of his teammates and friends have shaved their heads to show their support for Ryan during his battle with cancer. He won the KDKA-TV Extra Effort Award and was named a WTAE-TV Action Athlete of the Week.