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ASHTABULA COUNTY FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

2004

- Warren Andrews — inaugural contributor
- Tony Barnes, PV
- George “Chic” Guamieri, Ashtabula
- Jim Henson, Grand Valley coach
- Bob Herpy, Geneva
- Jim Hietikko, Conneaut
- Paul Kopko, St. John coach
- Joe Mallone, Geneva
- Ralph Mauro, Edgewood
- Ken “Monk” Meyer, Harbor
- Chuck Naso, Jefferson
- Benjamin Olds, Conneaut
- Mel Olix, Ashtabula
- Mickey Sanzotta, Geneva
- Don Zalimeni, Harbor

2005

- Denny Allan, St. John
- Todd Baker, PV
- Tony Chiacchiero, Ashtabula
- Bill Davidson, Harbor
- Mark Debevc, Geneva
- Spiro Dellerba, Ashtabula
- Joe Ferl, Conneaut
- Leonard “Dutch” Hoppes, Conneaut coach
- Gary Lago, Edgewood

- Jim Merrell, Geneva
- Bill Ollila, Jefferson
- Fred Parnell, Harbor
- Tom Zakowski, Grand Valley

2006

- Alan Amy, PV
- John Anthony, Conneaut
- Tom Betta, Conneaut
- Ron Chutas, Grand Valley
- Paul Dellerba, Ashtabula
- Robert Fuller, Harbor
- Paul Hogan, Ashtabula
- Tim Horst, Edgewood
- Harbor Ladner, Conneaut
- Wash Lyons, Ashtabula
- Dan McGinnis, St. John coach

- Clyde Means, Jefferson
- Tim Packrail, Geneva
- Randy Park, Jefferson
- North Soltys, Harbor coach

2007

- Dale Arkenburg, Geneva
- Dave Berkowitz, Edgewood
- John Bleshoy, PV
- Jim Boltman, Harbor
- Bill Brainard, Jefferson
- Paul Dombroski, Conneaut
- Jim Dyke, Grand Valley

- Lance Hammond, Jefferson
- Larry Jepson, Ashtabula
- Mike Kaydo, Ashtabula
- Don Laaksonen, Harbor
- John Montgomery, Geneva
- Gene Pushic, St. John coach
- John Rhodes, Rowe
- Russ Salberg, Edgewood coach

2008

- Mike Bell, Pymatuning Valley
- Rick Brunot, Conneaut
- Dale Corlew, Edgewood
- Don Craine, Geneva
- Emmett Delaney, Jefferson
- Francis “Ducky” DiPietro, Ashtabula

- Larry Featsent, Ashtabula
- Gary Febel, Jefferson
- Kaiser Holman, Harbor
- Bob Lampela, Harbor
- Urban Meyer, St. John
- Ed Pizzuto, Geneva
- Mick Shoaf, Grand Valley
- Joe White, Conneaut
- Jim Cordell, Gene Gephart,
- Pat Sheldon — WFUN radio team

2009

- Mike Adams, Jefferson
- Mike Blauman, Geneva
- Jim Bordeaux, Harbor
- Jarrod Bunch, Ashtabula
- Walter Coleman, Grand Valley
- Doug Deal, Geneva
- Nick Deligianis, Ashtabula
- Jim Holub, Ashtabula
- Tom Kilker, St. John
- Al Lundstrom, Harbor
- Dave Melaragno, Edgewood
- Randy Pope, Ashtabula
- Mark Sanford, Conneaut
- Clint Schertzer, PV
- John Yesso, Conneaut

2010

- Erland Ahlberg, Conneaut
- Jim Davin, Conneaut
- Bob DeMay, St. John
- Jimmy Henson, Grand Valley
- Dean Hood, Harbor
- Mark Jablonski, Geneva
- Joe Kearney, coach
- Lou Konyha, PV
- Wayne Lomas, Geneva
- Bob Ockman, Harbor
- Karl Pearson — Star Beacon
- Joe Sanford, Conneaut

- David Six, Edgewood coach
- Clarence Watters, Ashtabula
- Terry Weaver, Ashtabula
- John Workman, Jefferson

2011

- Steve Abraham, St. John
- Orvall Belle, Ashtabula
- Scott Bell, PV
- Willie Carlton, Ashtabula
- Bob Dombroski, Edgewood
- Henry Garvey — official
- Paul Halleck, Wayne
- Mike Hassett, Geneva
- Bruno Mallone, Geneva coach
- Bob Millberg, Harbor
- Larry Ogren, Conneaut
- Elmer “Buck” Peaspanen, Conneaut coach
- Joe Shoaf, Grand Valley coach
- Ray Shore, Jefferson
- Bob Sidbeck, Harbor
- Greg Ware, Geneva

2012

- Alvin Benton, Ashtabula
- Francis J. Burke, St. John
- Tim Coy, Geneva
- Brian Gaines, Harbor

- Gordie Hitchcock, PV
- Brian Laffey, Harbor
- Gary Lillvis, Harbor
- Vaughn Tittle, Ashtabula
- Rick Malizia, Geneva
- Lowell Moodt, Grand Valley
- John Peaspanen, Conneaut
- Jim Richards, Jefferson asst. coach
- Mark Wheeler, Conneaut
- Lou Wisnyai, Edgewood

2013

- David Dick, PV
- Tony Hassett, Geneva
- Matthew Hatchette, Jefferson
- David Huey, Edgewood
- Dennis Jepson, Ashtabula
- Ed Jones, Harbor
- Marvin Kuula, Harbor
- Scott Marcy, Conneaut
- Patrick McNamara, Ashtabula
- David Nye, Grand Valley
- Ken Parise, PV & Conneaut coach
- Don Rebera, St. John
- Gregory Showalter, Conneaut
- Rich Spangler, Geneva

HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2014

All stories written by former Star Beacon sports writer Chris Larick. Pages designed by Sports Editor Vince Peluso and edited by sports writer Matt Wagner and Star Beacon Editor Matt Hutton.

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FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

Schulte aired it out at Harbor

QB lit up the scoreboard with Mariners before playing college football

By **CHRIS LARICK**
For the Star Beacon

Dana Schulte, a 1982 Harbor High School graduate, was dissatisfied with the veer offense used by West Virginia Wesleyan University when he was a freshman quarterback.

Dean Hood was unhappy that he wasn't successful at walking on at Ohio University.

After Schulte saw an article in Sports Illustrated saying a quarterback at Ohio Wesleyan University had set a school record by passing 76 times in a game, Schulte thought that sounded more like an offense he would like. He called Hood, his childhood friend who had starred with him at Harbor High School, where the two played pitch-and-catch for three years. The two hatched a plan to transfer to Ohio Wesleyan as a package deal.

"Dean did all the work," said Schulte, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club's Hall of Fame on Dec. 8. "Dean would play defense (he became an All-American free safety) and I would play quarterback."

The two also talked Andy Catano, another Ashtabula friend who had played at St. John, into transferring.

The trio were elated — until the head coach was fired during training camp in August and the new coach decided they would run the veer, the very offense Schulte had transferred to avoid.

"They liked me because I was big and ran well, but I hated it," Schulte said. "We stuck it out, though. The three of us were from Ashtabula. It was fun. You can't replace that. I got my degree, majored in broadcast communications and used it for my career here. I got an education I wouldn't have got without sports."

That anecdote reveals two of Schulte's biggest assets: the permanence of his relationships and his manner of casting the brightest light possible on situations.

He and Hood, now the head coach at Eastern Kentucky University, are still tight after all these years. Schulte and

DANA SCHULTE



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:** Harbor High School.
■ **GRADUATION YEAR:** 1982
■ **POSITION:** Quarterback.

Dan Platano, his coach at Harbor in high school, visited Hood at Christmas time.

Positivity? Schulte remembers how an injury he incurred in the eighth grade, a broken right collarbone, worked to his advantage.

"I missed half the season," he said. "That's how I learned to play left-handed. I had to dribble and shoot left-handed. It was sort of a blessing in disguise."

Schulte had started playing football with the Ashtabula Midget League's Dolphins in the first year of that group's existence. He had always seen himself as a quarterback, pretending to be Terry Bradshaw or Brian Sipe. And that's what he became, from those early days all the way through college.

"We had a good team, with Ray Kovacs, Johnny Marks, Timmy Moore and Andy Catano — a lot of good players," Schulte said.

Hood didn't play at that level, not until junior high school.

"That's when Dean and I started hooking up (as receiver and quarterback)," Schulte said. "Dean and I were like brothers growing up. We played football relentlessly, every day. In the season, I played basketball every day. He wasn't able to do it as much as I could. I lived down the street from Brooker.

"There were no video games or things like that, so we played any kind of sports — nerf football, whiffle ball. Those things developed your arms and legs. We played basketball in the driveway. Back then your mom could yell at you from the porch to come home; you could be playing at 10 o'clock at night. Those days are gone."

Schulte's elementary and junior high teams were good, but the teams from Ashtabula often took their measure.

"They were always bigger and stronger than we were, but in high school we caught up to them," he said. "I don't think we lost to 'Bula in football or basketball in high school. That was quite a feat because they beat us all

the time in junior high."

When Schulte's class hit the ninth grade, Paul Bodnar was their football coach.

"I have a lot of fond memories of him," Schulte said. "He was creative and let us experiment in football. It was great to be able to see what a lot of people could do. It was fun. I have a thing about sports bonds you make, and friendships."

Schulte started as the third-string quarterback for Harbor as a freshman, but was elevated to the varsity team because of injuries and wound up playing in one game.

"I remember how scared I was," he said. "I got into the game and one of the linemen was snorting, his nose flaring, and said, 'You'd better not fumble.' I went to the line and fumbled, but fell on it. He grabbed my face mask and said, 'You'd better not do that again.' I almost fumbled again, but held onto it. I finally relaxed on the third play."

By their sophomore years, Schulte and Hood were both starting, Hood as tight end and linebacker.

"We weren't as good as we became," Schulte said. "It was trial and error. Coach Platano threw us into the fire. Some of the seniors didn't go out or got hurt, so we got to play a lot. I think it helped us."

But the Mariners didn't really succeed until that class became seniors.

"Our junior year we didn't have a winning record," Schulte said. "Our talent didn't click. It all came together our senior year."

Schulte particularly remembers the Geneva game. The Eagles had prevailed the previous year when Rick Malizia had a great game.

"Coach Platano gave us some new wrinkles for that game," Schulte said. "I was a running quarterback my junior year, but he didn't allow me to run as much as a senior. But that game he put in a wrinkle that was like the read option. It opened up the passing game and Dean (Hood) got a couple of touchdowns. Dean caught one ball that was like the Joe Montana-Dwight Clark pass. That was a tremendous catch. I was scrambling.

"(Geneva coach) Bob Herpy was a class act. He came onto our bus and complimented Dean and myself, said



Submitted Photo

DANA SCHULTE had a successful career at Harbor High School.

See **SCHULTE**, Page 16

Takacs never shied away from contact

JEFF TAKACS



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:** Grand Valley High School.
 ■ **GRADUATION YEAR:** 1988
 ■ **POSITION:** Running back; linebacker.

By **CHRIS LARICK**
For the Star Beacon

Grand Valley running back-linebacker Jeff Takacs always believed that a straight line was the shortest distance to the goal line.

If defenders were in the way, so much the better.

"I didn't run around people, I ran over them," said Takacs, who accumulated 1,677 yards in 296 carries (5.67 average) during his two-year stint as a starter at fullback for the Mustangs.

"It was no fun running around them. Dave Hendershott (the announcer at Grand Valley football games) told me, 'You would've had so many more yards if you ran around them.' To me, that's not football. Football is smashing them."

The Mustang team of Takacs' tenure (1985-1987) did a lot of smashing. With

Mustang RB preferred to run through opponents

standouts like Jimmy Henson and Brian Turner at quarterback, Takacs and Brian Snowberger at running back and Adam and Carl McElroy at wide receivers, they had a formidable offense. Lowell Moodt, already in the ACTC's Hall of Fame, anchored the line. Other contributors included Dale Turner, Frank Makowski, Lonnie Troyer, Lee Hall, Bob Lee and Bill Enstrom.

"We were undefeated in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades," Takacs said. "In my junior and senior years we were 8-2. We had a good run."

Grand Valley made it to the state playoffs his junior year, only to be defeated by Hawken, led by future NFL wideout O.J. McDuffie.

"We shut him down as a running back," Takacs said of McDuffie. "When they put him at wide receiver our defensive backs couldn't handle him. He was tough."

Takacs, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club's Hall of Fame on Dec. 8 at Our Lady of Peace, actually got his football start at St. Mary's School in Painesville.

"In the first grade we were playing tackle football," Takacs laughed. "We moved to Ashtabula County in 1977 and I started second grade in the Grand Valley system."

He played flag football in Orwell at the start and progressed through the system.

"Every year was a big deal for me," he said. "Once I hit junior high I was with the same kids from grades 7-12."

By the time Takacs and his classmates were well-grounded in the Mustangs' system. Literally.

"All we did was pound the football," Takacs said. "We hardly passed at all."

Takacs loved it. Subtlety was never his strong point. Asked what he remembers most about that time as a linebacker and running back, he said, "I remember a lot (of players) I knocked out of the game. I remember the injuries.

"Making the playoffs was huge. I couldn't wait to play football. On Monday I would be thinking about football. I was insane. I loved the game and still do today. Those were good times, definitely. There was nothing like a Friday night football game."

He loved the coaches — head coach Jim Henson and assistants Tom Henson and Ron Chutas — too. The Hensons had a reputation for toughness. That was mother's milk to Takacs.

"I loved playing for Tom when the veins bulged out of his neck," Takacs said. "If you did the job for him, you didn't hear from him. You wanted to be on his good side.

"Jim Henson was another hard-nosed coach. I loved playing for him. Growing up and playing Grand Valley football, you wanted to be part of that scene. He was an awesome teacher and coach."

The third member of the staff, Chutas, was cut from a different mold, Takacs said.

"Ron was an easy-going guy," he said. "He would let Jim and Tom hash it out. He was like a mediator, more personable. I never saw him get overly serious about little things. (The three of them) were a perfect fit — brothers and friend."

At Grand Valley, Takacs was first-team Star Beacon All-Ashtabula County, first-team All-Grand River Conference and first-team all-district as a junior and senior. He moved up from honorable-mention all-Ohio

See **TAKACS**, Page 17

No one out-worked Toukonen

Falcons lineman was always pushing to improve his game

By **CHRIS LARICK**
For the Star Beacon

Alex Toukonen and his fellow Jefferson linemen honed their skills on Mondays, the day normally devoted to non-contact.

According to Toukonen, coach Glenn Sutherin generally let his skill-set personnel have a light practice that day of the week. Not so for the linemen.

"The line had to push the (blocking) sled for a mile," said Toukonen, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club Hall of Fame on Dec. 8. "He and an assistant, Jim Richards, would get on that seven-man sled. We worked

ALEX TOUKONEN



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:** Jefferson High School.
 ■ **GRADUATION YEAR:** 1978
 ■ **POSITION:** Offensive lineman

hard on our endurance on Mondays. He wanted his linemen a little meaner. He was right out of the Woody Hayes mold."

That was fine with Toukonen, especially considering the results Sutherin's methods attained. The Falcons had not been an impressive team before Sutherin took the job. In Toukonen's three years as a starter, they went 22-7-1 and notched a Grand River Conference title tie his junior year and the outright title one year later.

"I thought he was a great coach," Toukonen said. "He

could turn a program around. He had coached at Canton or Massillon. He turned East Liverpool around, too. He demanded discipline and yelled at everybody equally, maybe the linemen a little more because that was his area of expertise.

"Glenn loved football and had a plan. He brought a lot of discipline to the team. He rocked the boat a little. A huge thing in Jefferson now is Falcon Follies. He put us in there. You couldn't say no to him. He had us in little dancers' outfits."

In 1975, Toukonen's sophomore year, only 22 players went out for football at Jefferson, just three of which were sophomores.

"There weren't enough to have a team practice when I started," he said. "Winning

See **TOUKONEN**, Page 17



Submitted Photo

ALEX TOUKONEN, former Jefferson lineman, pictured with his partner, Tonya Cardona.

Dinger zigged to success at Conneaut

JEFF DINGER



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:**
Conneaut High School
■ **GRADUATION**
YEAR: 2001
■ **POSITION:**
Wide receiver

By **CHRIS LARICK**
For the Star Beacon

It would be nice if every football player had a play especially designed for him to shine.

Conneaut wide receiver Jeff Dinger had one, and it might have enhanced his college scholarship hopes.

“Coach (Rob) Eager had a play called ‘zig pass,’” said Dinger, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club Hall of Fame at Mount Carmel Community Center on Dec. 8. “We ran it every time we were within 20 yards of the end zone. I think it worked 98 percent of the time we ran it.”

The play called for quarterback Ken Nuzum to loft the ball to the corner of the end zone, where the 6-foot-5 Dinger was waiting. Dinger used his height and good hands to catch the ball for a touchdown.

“I think I caught it every time it was called,” Dinger said. “I think I scored eight touchdowns off it that year (2000), and most of them were off that play.”

The 2000 season was an important one in Spartans’ football history. Two years earlier coach Ken Parise had come to Conneaut from Pymatuning Valley to rebuild the program. That was also the year



Submitted Photo

JEFF DINGER (88) was a stand out receiver with the Conneaut Spartans.

that Dinger, already a basketball star at Conneaut, had decided to share his talents with the football squad.

There was no magic turnaround in 1998. It took time for the predominantly young players to mature and learn the system.

“The first two years, I think we won one or two games a year,” Dinger said. “My senior year we won six or seven games and were one game away from the playoffs, but we lost to Harvey.”

That final game of the season was a letdown for the Spartans, who

had beaten Jefferson one week earlier in a rough-and-tumble game that assured Conneaut a share of the Northeastern Conference championship. Then Harvey won Week 10 to make it so the two schools shared the title.

Dinger lettered all three of those years, playing wide receiver on offense and free safety on defense, as well as serving as punt returner. At 6-foot-5, he led Ashtabula County in receptions his junior and senior seasons and was an All-NEC and Star Beacon All-Ashtabula first-teamer both years. As a

senior, he also led the county in interceptions (seven, if Dinger’s memory serves him correctly).

“He was an important contributor to leading the Spartans to the league championship,” Parise said.

Dinger might have caught even more passes except Parise deployed a run-based Wing-T offense. He had the horses to do that, with running backs Matt and Adam Kopacz and a line that included standouts like J.T. Murtha, Forest Bean and Gary Tantari. On the defensive side of the ball, Matt Cantari stood out.

“And Ken Nuzum could really throw the long ball,” Dinger said. “Coach liked to run the ball. That was all right with me. I didn’t say too much about that.”

“We had a lot of good coaches: coach Parise, coach (Bill) Lipps, Bob Lundin, Joel Taylor and Rob Eager. Eric Showalter (who will also enter the Hall of Fame this year) helped coach my junior and senior years.

“I had no problems with coach Parise. He was always on my side and I was always on his side. He taught us how to win. He took over after years of losing. He tried to build that back up.”

Though Dinger was an outstanding wide receiver, he made first-team all-state as a defensive back. At both positions, he used his height to advantage.

“Being 6-5, going against a defensive back that was 5-6 was always a little advantage,” he said. “When I played safety, it was almost like playing the outfield. I was free to do whatever I wanted, not just pick up a speedy receiver.”

A recent trend in the NFL is drafting basketball players to play tight end or wide receiver. Playing basketball did help him in some ways in playing football, Dinger feels.

“I have played basketball my whole life,” he said. “It’s pretty much timing, going up and getting the ball. Going up for a rebound and going up for a lob pass in the end zone are similar.”

Dinger had been a star on Kent Houston’s NEC championship-winning basketball teams, playing

See **DINGER**, Page 18

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For Louys, transfer worked out well

Move from Edgewood to Ashtabula helped lead two-way player to HOF

By **CHRIS LARICK**
For the Star Beacon

Bob Louys didn't know quite what to expect when he transferred from Edgewood to Ashtabula High School as a senior in 1962.

"My dad moved the family when I was growing up," Louys said. "He worked for the railroad and we didn't have a lot of money. In my senior year we moved to State Road."

Fortunately for Louys, who had played football, basketball and baseball for Edgewood, the transition from one school to another was eased by his new classmates and teammates.

He had known many of them from playing with and against them on Little League teams and in previous high school contests.

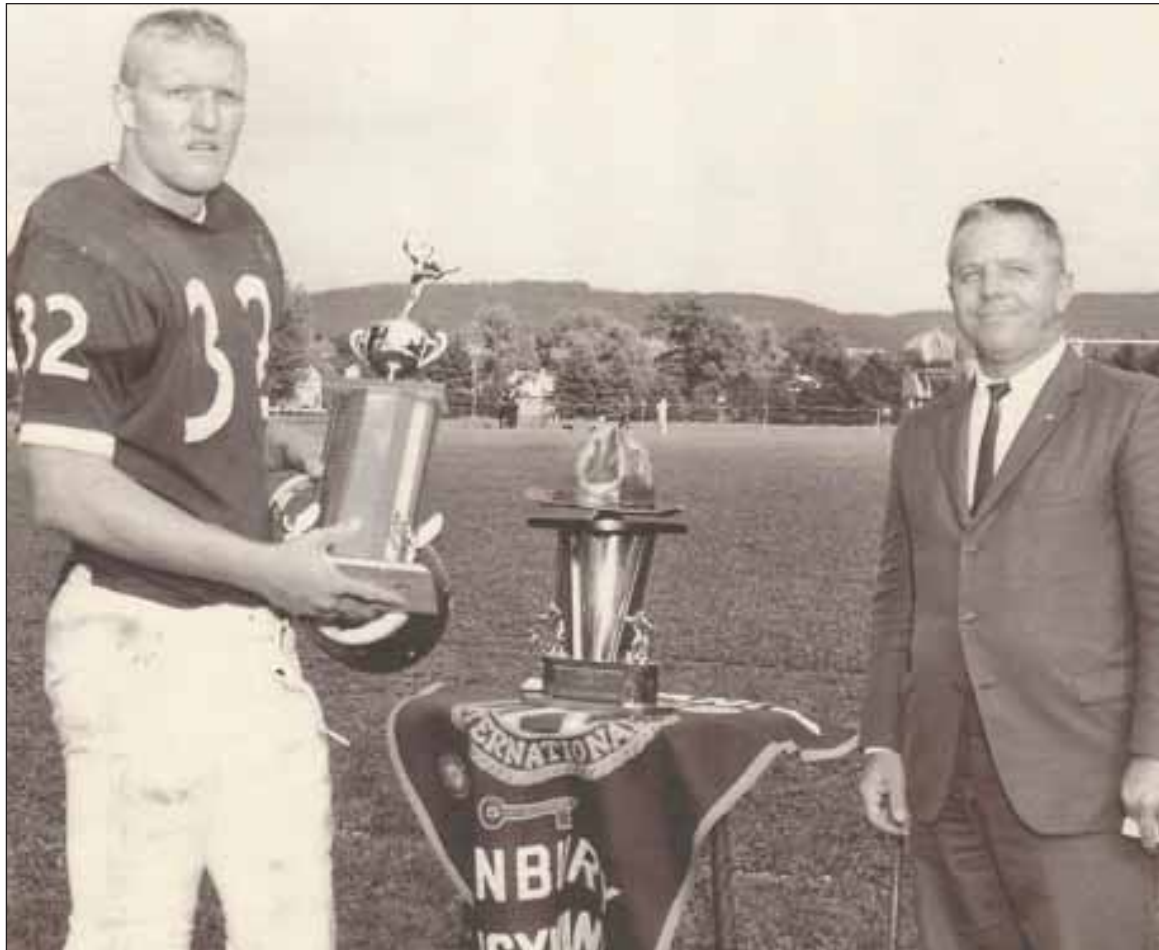
While at Edgewood, Louys lettered in both football and basketball as a sophomore and junior and in baseball for all three undergraduate years. He was voted MVP in 1961 and threw a no-hitter against Madison.

"I had played baseball with Lou Wisnyai and had played against Wash Lyons and others," Louys said. "They treated me great when I went to Ashtabula. I fit right in."

Louys, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club's Hall of Fame on Dec. 8, had really enjoyed playing baseball for coach Walter Higgins, basketball for Bob Larkin and football for Russ Salberg at Edgewood. He found he also enjoyed playing for Ashtabula's coaches.

At the time, Tony Chiacchiero was head football coach at Ashtabula. Chiacchiero had built the program well from a humble foundation. As a result, his senior team was loaded.

Louys, who had already lettered for two years with the Warriors, played offensive halfback and defensive cornerback.



Submitted Photo

BOB LOUYS, a standout at Ashtabula High School, is shown accepting the MVP award at the Susquehanna University "Old Hat Trophy Bowl."

Twelve players saw consistent playing time, including five who eventually earned Division I scholarships — Wash Lyons and Dennis DeGennaro (Ohio University), Bill Mooney and Calvin Jepson (Vanderbilt) and Larry Featsent (Syracuse).

The Panthers' 1962 line consisted of Mooney, Gibby and Calvin Jepson, DeGennaro, Duane Hadlock, Featsent and John Stevenson. Larry Shively led the backfield at quarterback and was joined by Louys and Gary Pease at the halfbacks. Lyons, the fullback, was the offensive star of the team, which finished 9-0-1 after recording a tie in the final game.

On defense, Shively came out of the game and Dave Sheldon went in at defensive back.

Louys led the Panthers in recep-

tions and interceptions that year and averaged 41 yards as a punter. He was voted "Back of the Week" against Harbor in the city playoffs.

"Dennis (DeGennaro) and I played Little League baseball with all of those kids," Louys said. "After football came basketball with Mr. (Gene) Gephart as our coach.

"We were district champions. I made the all-sectional team. I played with Dave Sheldon, Joey DeAngelo and Calvin and Gibby Jepson."

Later, Louys played on intramural basketball teams with the likes of Bob Walters, John Scoville and Jerry Raffenaud.

After graduating from Ashtabula, Louys attended Marietta College, where he started his freshman year at wide receiver and punter, earn-

ing honorable-mention status. He was moved to halfback his sophomore year and played the remaining three seasons there.

While at Marietta, Louys broke the school record with an 87-yard punt, a mark he believes still stands. He was honorable mention All-Ohio Conference, on Hillsdale College's "All-Opponent team," Alonzo Stagg Bowl MVP and Marietta's MVP-Offensive Back in 1965. He was later named to Marietta College's 1960's All-Decade team.

After graduating in 1967, Louys gave semi-pro football a brief whirl, signing a contract with the Orlando Panthers, but he did not play the entire season.

"I realized I wasn't good enough," he said. "I came back home and taught school in Ashtab-

BOB LOUYS



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:**
Ashtabula High School
■ **GRADUATION**
YEAR: 1963
■ **POSITION:** Running
back; defensive back

ula for two years, teaching social studies and serving as an assistant football coach."

While working out at the YMCA, he came across Frank Farello, whom he described as "one of the finest men I've ever met."

Louys and Farello are now brothers-in-law, having married sisters.

In 1970 Louys landed a job with the FBI in Jackson, Miss. and worked for the FBI for 27 years before retiring in 1997.

"I investigated crimes involving auto theft, bank robberies, kidnappings, crimes of violence, drugs and crimes on a government reservation," Louys said. "I served as a relief supervisor, informant coordinator, vehicle theft coordinator and equal employment investigator."

After a year in Jackson, Louys was transferred to Detroit, where he worked on such well-known cases as the Jimmy Hoffa disappearance.

He was also involved in several murder cases, along with the arrest of Martin McNally, who, in 1972, hijacked an American Airlines jetliner, then parachuted, a la D.B. Cooper, before being caught in a house in a Detroit suburb.

"I escorted him to the jail," Louys said.

Another notable arrest Louys and his partner made was Sam Christian, an FBI 10 Most Wanted criminal. He also assisted with a major case of drugs coming into the country from South America.

During his career, in addition to two within-grade promotions and several monetary incentive awards, Louys was honored with numerous letters of commendation, including one from the Attorney General of the United States. He also served on the FBI's SWAT team. As a firearms instructor and competitive

See LOUYS, Page 17

Olin led the right side

Guard always knew
where he wanted
Harbor to run the ball

By **CHRIS LARICK**
For the Star Beacon

Whenever the 1968 undefeated Harbor Mariners needed a play to save the day, Bill Olin had a suggestion.

“Dive right,” Olin would say in the huddle.

Often quarterback Larry Hummer called that play, which, went behind Olin at right guard.

Despite the fact he stood just 5 foot 8 and weighed 150 pounds, Olin was likely to take his man out and the Mariners would get that needed first down.

Olin’s size was not the disadvantage it may have seemed. In fact, when the season was over, he was named Most Valuable Lineman, in addition to reaping first-team All-Ashtabula County, All-NEC and All-Northeast Ohio honors.

Nowadays, Olin continues to save mariners on dives, even if his efforts are more likely to rescue imperiled swimmers, as commander of the Ashtabula County Water Rescue Team.

Most of that 10-0 Harbor team had played together since the seventh grade and were 8-2-1 as juniors. The Mariners had an 18-game winning streak at one time until Erie Strong Vincent beat them in the first game of the 1969 season.

“Some of those guys are my best friends to this day,” said Olin, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula

BILL OLIN



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:**
Harbor High School
■ **GRADUATION**
YEAR: 1969
■ **POSITION:** Right
guard

County Touchdown Club Hall of Fame on Dec. 8 at Our Lady of Peace Community Center. “We had amazing camaraderie. I liken it to today, Harbor and Ashtabula coming together at Lakeside. Our kids came together — farm kids, east side kids, country club kids. It was like a melting pot, a unique experience.”

Among the standouts on that team, in addition to Olin, were Hummer, Paul Cafaro, Kenny Bires, and Curtis Siler in the backfield and Bobby Millberg as a wide receiver and jack-of-all-trades. Roger Goudy, now the superintendent at Madison, was at tight end. Greg Fritz was a standout in the defensive backfield, running three interceptions back for touchdowns. Gary Lillvis, the first of that team to be inducted into the ACTC’s Hall of Fame, was a sophomore lineman on the team. Dale Theis was voted most valuable player on defense. Dante Monda joined Lillvis as most improved sophomores and Siler and Jim Candela were named most improved juniors.

“Larry Hummer and Bobby Millberg were great friends and worked together well,” Olin said.

Of Olin, Jim Henry, who has turned into the historian of that team and played in the defensive

backfield, said, “Bill was a stand-out, a hard worker and one of the stronger guys on the team. He was a tri-captain, but a real modest guy. There’s no telling how good he would have been if he was five inches taller.”

That Mariners’ team was later voted the greatest team that ever played at Harbor.

“It was a great group of guys,” Henry said. “It was a team effort. Eveybody came together and made it happen.”

“We started lifting when we first got together,” Olin remembers. “We were one of the first teams to have an intense lifting program. I weighed 150 but I could bench 300 pounds. When I went to college, I got my butt kicked.”

That lifting program began when Jim Orr became head coach.

“He was an innovator,” Olin said of Orr. “We built the benches in shop class, built them ourselves.

“He had us believing in ourselves. We did wind sprints; our conditioning was better than anyone around. Our backs ran 4.3 (40-yard sprints), our linemen 4.8. No one was over 5.0. He had us believing we were that quick and that strong.”

The team was incredibly close, too, Olin said, reciting an anecdote about an incident when a mother of one of the players brought donuts to a practice.

“A couple of our seniors made a move to take a donut before Orr was done with his speech,” Olin said. “He yelled at them and said they weren’t going to start.”

See **OLIN**, Page 18



Submitted Photo

BILL OLIN helped lead the undefeated Harbor Mariners as a right guard.

EAST ASHTABULA CLUB
Congratulates this years Hall of Fame Inductees
and Scholar Athletes

Koschar was at center of great Geneva teams

Underrated lineman was big part of unit that led Eagles to 21-straight wins

By **CHRIS LARICK**
For the Star Beacon

Coach Bob Herpy's Geneva Eagle football teams of 1975 and 1976 teams were loaded with talent, both in players and coaches.

Those Eagle teams went undefeated in consecutive years, a feat few Ashtabula County squads have been able to accomplish. All told, they won 21-straight games.

In 1976 All-Northeastern Conference and Star Beacon All-Ashtabula County voters acknowledged Geneva's superiority, naming Herpy Coach of the Year, running back Greg Wilcox Player of the Year and about half of the Eagle starters to first-team status.

Among that group, perhaps under-recognized because of the sheer depth of the team and the position he played, was center Rick Koschar, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club Hall of Fame on Dec. 8.

What most people don't know about Koschar is that he was the only three-year starter on the squad, having started as a defensive tackle as a sophomore in 1974.

Like most of Geneva's stars of that era, Koschar began his football career in the Geneva Midget League, as a member of the Colts. His coach was Don Craine, whose son, Dan, will also be inducted into the ACTC Hall of Fame this year.

"That's kind of ironic," Koschar said.

Koschar played fullback for the Colts. Even when he became a lineman he had the speed to run with the backs.

"My philosophy in athletics is that speed is the most important thing," Koschar said. "Everyone on that (Geneva) team was so quick and so fast. All of us had a ton of speed. In high school I could punt better than

RICK KOSCHAR



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:** Geneva High School.
■ **GRADUATION YEAR:** 1977
■ **POSITION:** Center

Mark Csepegi (who held down that job), but they needed me to snap the ball. But I was often the first one downfield from my center position."

One of Geneva's big advantages over opponents was its depth. The Eagles had so much talent they almost had no two-way players. That gave them two advantages: the defense could rest while the offense was on the field and vice versa, and the unit not on the field could benefit from sideline coaching.

On offense, the 1976 Eagles had Mark Jablonski (then a junior) at quarterback, Wilcox at halfback and Greg Scafuro at fullback. Harvey Jessup, Bob Gaylord and sometimes Steve Dragon were the wide receivers, while the line consisted of Derren Cole, Randy Hackathorn, Koschar, Csepegi, Dave Merrell and David Gernot.

The defense was just as loaded. Tony and Mike Hassett played at the tackles, with Tony Barszczewski and Dan Carraher in the middle and Dragon and Scafuro at defensive ends. Brian Rembacki, Ken Covell and John Ferguson played linebacker, with Randy and Rick Puckrin alternating at defensive backs with Jessup and Gaylord.

"We all played together from junior high on up," Tony Hassett said.

The varsity coaching staff consisted of Herpy, Dick Hunt (who recently died), Tom Koehler and Dick Pierce.

"The two ninth-grade coaches, Stan Bielech and Jim Deering, were very influential too," Koschar said.

See **KOSCHAR**, Page 16



Submitted Photo

THE GENEVA LETTERMEN from the 1977 were part of a strong period of Eagles football. At the center, just like his position, is No. 70 Rick Koschar.

THE WARREN ANDREWS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP ASSOCIATION

SALUTES THE 2014 INDUCTEES INTO THE ASHTABULA COUNTY FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

Coach led DeGennaro to success

Chiacchiero helped push lineman to be his best at Ashtabula

By **CHRIS LARICK**
For the Star Beacon

When Ashtabula former teammates Dennis DeGennaro and Bob Louys are inducted into the Ashtabula County Hall of Fame on Dec. 8 at Our Lady of Peace Community Center, one person will be beaming broadly.

Their former coach, Tony Chiacchiero, arguably, had more to do with their success than any other person.

“We were never afraid to play anybody,” said DeGennaro of the Panthers who culminated their success with a 9-0-1 record in 1962. “Coach Chiacchiero scheduled teams like Mentor, Eastlake North, Willoughby South and Wickliffe when it was a power. Most of the time we beat ‘em.”

DeGennaro, who played center and middle guard for Ashtabula for three years, also gives a lot of credit to assistants Randy Pope, Ben Klepek and Gene Gephart with helping his development.

“Once Chiacchiero had the program established, we won the NEC (Northeastern Conference) championship seven times in eight years and won 86 percent of our games,” DeGennaro said. “When I look back on it, it was unbelievable.

“We had great players and great coaches. We didn’t have any prima donnas or showoffs. As good as Wash Lyons was, he never bragged about it.

“Coach Chiacchiero worked us hard, but he always treated us with fairness and respect. There was no swearing and no grabbing of players. All the coaches were good coaches and real gentlemen. When I look back on it now, I just happened to be in the right place at the right time. He did things the right way. A lot of games we had won by halftime, but he never ran up the score. He was smart; he gave the younger kids experience.”

One thing Chiacchiero did was make sure that the Panthers had the best equipment, DeGennaro said.

“When I got to Ohio University I found out that we had better equipment at Ashtabula,” he said. “We had better helmets, shoulder pads, hip pads and shoes. Coach Chiacchiero insisted we have the best equipment. One year we had 100

DENNIS DeGENNARO



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:** Ashtabula High School.
■ **GRADUATION YEAR:** 1962
■ **POSITION:** Center; middle guard

players out for football and needed more equipment, but he wouldn’t cut players.”

Under Chiacchiero and his assistants’ tutelage, DeGennaro earned all-city, all-NEC, all-county, honorable mention all-Ohio honors as a senior.

He played both ways as a center and middle guard in football, lettering three years. He also lettered in basketball for one year and baseball for three years on very good Panther teams. He also earned an athletic scholarship to Ohio University.

The Panthers’ 1962 team was loaded, with Bill Mooney, Gibby and Calvin Jepson, DeGennaro, Duane Hadlock, Larry Featsent and John Stevenson on the line. Larry Shively played quarterback and was joined by Louys and Gary Pease at the halfbacks. Lyons, the fullback, was the offensive star of the team. When Ashtabula went on defense, Shively left the field and Dave Sheldon replaced him as a defensive back.

“No one threw the ball much then,” DeGennaro said. “We were a fullback-oriented offense, ran sweeps and traps. Wash was the best athlete of that era, but he never thought he was better than anyone else.

“When we played, we did it the right way. We never bragged or made excuses. I wouldn’t have had it any other way.

“If you played for coach Chiacchiero, you deserved to play. It didn’t matter who you were or who your father was. He did things with class. When I look back on it, I’m proud to say I played football at Ashtabula High School.”

DeGennaro played a lot as a sophomore, but was injured that summer playing baseball. He made it back to the starting lineup the second half of his junior season and became a dominant player as a senior despite playing on the line at 195 pounds.

“I happened to be in the right place at the right time,” he said. “We went 25-3-2 in my three years and we played (a) no creampuff schedule. We played Riverside and Harvey when it was still in its heyday just a few years after John Mummy,

played some good Harbor teams and Geneva, which had Mark Debevc later on. A lot of my teammates could just as easily be in the Hall of Fame.”

Some of the victories over big teams are still memorable to DeGennaro.

“When I was a sophomore, we beat Mentor 28-0. We lost to them when I was a junior, 21-18. We beat Eastlake North when they were strong, 22-20, and Wickliffe, 28-20. After I graduated, we played Warren Western Reserve, which later won back-to-back state championships with Ross and Joey Browner. “Most of the time we won, but when we lost, we never got embarrassed. My senior year we scrimmaged Erie Cathedral Prep. We thought we’d get better if we played good competition and did it the right way.”

DeGennaro said he felt the Panthers often won because they were better conditioned than their opponents.

“We won a lot of games because we were in better shape, fundamentally sound and better prepared,” he said.

Much of the credit for five members of that team earning Division I college scholarships has to go to Chiacchiero, DeGennaro said.

“After our senior season, coach Chiacchiero, at his own expense, took us to several college campuses,” he said. “Several of us went to Miami of Ohio, OU, Kent State and met with the Naval Academy representative in Cleveland. That five of us from the same school got scholarships is because of what coach Chiacchiero did that year. I don’t know of any other coach who would have done that. He worked for his ballplayers.”

Playing football at Ohio University wasn’t the dream that DeGennaro might have hoped for, though.

There was the weight problem. DeGennaro had played at about 195 pounds for the Panthers, but had bulked up to about 205. When he arrived at Athens that summer the weather was sizzling and he dropped to 185, not ideal for an offensive or defensive lineman.

“Physically, I was mismatched,” he said. “I wasn’t big, but had played inside. They switched me to defensive end in spring football. Over the rest of the summer I went from sixth-team defensive end to the second team. The guys I was behind were all seniors.

“I had some surgery that summer and

See DeGENNARO, Page 19



Submitted Photo

DENNIS DEGENNARO had a successful career on both sides of the line for Ashtabula High School.

Kanicki part of Warriors' air assault

Edgewood receiver helped Melaragno open up his offense

By **CHRIS LARICK**
For the Star Beacon

The Edgewood Warriors football team was struggling along, winning two or three games per year, until coach Dave Melaragno had an inspiration.

Melaragno's idea of installing the run-and-shoot offense paid immediate dividends in 1985, when the Warriors won six of 10 games and with three of the losses coming by close margins.

Quarterback Brad Petro was the trigger of the offense, hitting targets like J.T. Kanicki, Gerald McMahan, Brian Boles and Steve Diemer.

The offensive line of Glen Holden, Todd Hjerpe, Doug Breedlove, Chris Monda and Chris Allen were assigned to blocking for Petro and running backs Lou Winsnyai and Chip Radosvich. Gary Detrick also contributed as a running back.

"You've got to have the right quarterback and people to catch the ball," said Kanicki, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club on Dec. 8 at Mount Carmel Community Center.

You also have to have a running attack to keep the defense honest, and the Warriors had that in Wisnyai and Radosovich.

"Lou Wisnyai was a big part of our offense," Kanicki said. "We ran a lot of counters to both sides. Lou and Brian Boles ran them extremely well.

"It was the neatest offense. I hadn't seen a spread offense like that around here, with our short passes and running game. Edgewood was one of the first teams to use that."

Though the Warriors went just 6-4 that year, they had proved the viability of the offense and the relative success they had set the tone for the following season, when they went 9-1.

"They really should have gone



Submitted Photo

J.T. KANICKI, shown with his family, was a standout receiver while at Edgewood.

10-0," Kanicki said. "They had a group of guys at the core who had tasted that success."

As far as the 1985 team was concerned, it might have done better had a juggernaut not arisen right next door. The Conneaut Spartans went 10-0, won the Northeastern Conference and advanced to the playoffs.

Edgewood lost to Conneaut, 12-8, and suffered two other close defeats. The only one-sided loss was to a strong Geneva team. The Warriors led Champion, 14-0, at the half, but the Golden Flashes came back to beat them.

Melaragno spread the wealth around that year, meaning no individual had tremendous receiving stats. Kanicki estimated he caught about 40 passes for 500-600 yards.

He also threw a touchdown pass against Ashtabula on a trick play that went for a 60-yard touchdown that raised the Warriors' lead to 21-7.

"Dave installed it that week," Kanicki recalled. "He called it right before halftime. Dave had pulled us all together on the sideline and said, 'Get ready.'

"I had split out and Brad (Petro) threw the ball on the ground, later-

ally. I caught it on the first bounce. I knew the ball was live. Lou Wisnyai was wide open."

As it so happened, Panther star Jarrod Bunch, who later played for Michigan and the New York Giants, returned the ensuing kickoff 90 yards for a touchdown, negating the effect of the play and making it 21-14. Edgewood eventually won, 30-20.

"We shut him down the whole game, except for that," Kanicki said.

Kanicki had given high school baseball up after his freshman year, but was a starter on the Edgewood basketball team under Al Goodwin. The Warriors were co-champions of the NEC his junior year, but lost out to Geneva as seniors.

After the season, Kanicki drew some interest from Division III schools like Mount Union and Thiel, but decided to go to Toledo instead. Though he received a letter from the school inviting him to walk on as a football player, he opted against that.

"I decided I was not a Division I football player," he said, "that I was going there for an education."

At the time, Kanicki was planning to be a lawyer, but his father,

former Cleveland Brown defensive lineman Jim Kanicki, who was on the Browns' last NFL championship team in 1964, had just taken over Arthur Louis Steel in Ashtabula and encouraged him to go into business so that he would be able to go into business with him.

"He said, 'Get your degree in business and come back and work for me,'" J.T. said.

Kanicki finished his business degree with honors in Dec. 1990, but his dad had other plans than to put him right to work.

"He said, 'I think you need to get your master's degree,'" J.T. said. "'If you don't do it now, you never will.' So I enrolled at Lake Erie College and got it in three years."

In addition to his pro football background, Jim Kanicki has become a fixture in Ashtabula area high school football circles. He has been a huge supporter of the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club and for years co-sponsored the club's biggest scholarship, the Robert L. Wiese Award.

"He's my hero," J.T. said of his father. "He's a self-made man. He comes from a family of nine brothers and two sisters. He's almost 73 and still takes care of himself. He

J.T. KANICKI



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:**
Edgewood High School.
■ **GRADUATION**
YEAR: 1985
■ **POSITION:** Wide receiver

works out and golfs and is in good health.

"He's grown our company and did well at it. He's a smart guy."

J.T. went to work for his dad after he got his master's in 1994, but he didn't exactly start at the top.

"My brother Matt and I started at the bottom," Kanicki said. "I was trained as a salesperson. I had to learn all the procedures. I was really green. I had to know how they did things on the shop floor. I did a lot of manual work at first."

All four Kanicki brothers now work for the company. Bart, the oldest, is erection manager. J.T. and Matt are the executives in charge of the company. Greg came into the company after a 27-year stint in the U.S. military two years ago. He now handles the company business in Georgia.

The company has grown from about 10 employees to 40 or 50 at two different facilities, one in Ashtabula and the other in Geneva.

"We've really grown," Kanicki said. "My father was the big catalyst. He allowed us to spread our wings. It's truly a family business. It's good that it's going well because he sacrificed a lot for the company."

In May 1992, J.T. met Shirley Annick, a 1991 Edgewood graduate, at Lou Wisnyai's wedding.

"She gave me her number and we've been together since," Kanicki said. "We married in 1993."

The Kanickis have three children: Karli, a junior volleyball player and track athlete at Edgewood; Hayden, an eighth grader at Braden who plays football (quarterback) and basketball; and Kaci, a fourth-grader at Kingsville Elementary, who plays basketball and loves horses.

Showalter was destined to star at RB

Conneaut runner knew at a young age what he wanted

By **CHRIS LARICK**
For the Star Beacon

Eric Showalter decided what football position he wanted — no, which one he had to play — when he was in the fourth grade.

That was the year he saw Ohio State running back Keith Byars run over opponents, seemingly at will.

It didn't hurt that Showalter's brother Greg, seven years older than he was, was the star quarterback on Conneaut's undefeated team of 1983.

"My most direct influence was my brother Greg," said Showalter, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Touchdown's Hall of Fame on Dec. 8 at Mount Carmel Community Center.

"I was a sponge. All I wanted to do was be a Conneaut Spartan football player. Greg was the quarterback on an undefeated team. I would go to all the games and sit in the stands. I would wait for him to come home and bring in his duffel bag."

One of Greg Showalter's best friends on the team, fullback Dave Murzynski, was the fullback for the Spartans and set a team record of 1,002 yards rushing that year.

ERIC SHOWALTER



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:**
Conneaut High School.
■ **GRADUATION YEAR:** 1992
■ **POSITION:**
Running back

Steve Nolan was the head coach at Conneaut during that time ("Steve Nolan basically is responsible for bringing Conneaut football back," Showalter said), but Showalter fell more under the influence of one of his assistants, Rob Eager.

"Greg was always talking about coach Eager, how he coached and what kind of person he was," Eric Showalter said. "When I was in the fifth grade, Rob Eager was my teacher at Chestnut Elementary School. I thought, 'OK, this is my football coach.'"

Showalter was taller and bigger than his classmates, and Eager took him under his wing.

"He was always throwing me the ball," Showalter said. "I kept thinking, 'There's no dropping the ball.' I felt I had the reputations of my brothers to live up to."

As a running back, Byars had first impressed Showalter. His attention moved on to Walter Payton, his favorite running back. Other influences were Earl Campbell and Eric Dickerson.

"I tried to develop (Payton's) running style," he



Submitted Photo

ERIC SHOWALTER was a successful running back with the Conneaut Spartans.

said. "I was mentally already preparing myself."

Showalter's parents (Dick and Pat) hadn't let his older brothers play football until their freshman years because of the fear of injury, but because Eric was huskier, they gave their permission for him to play in the eighth grade.

"I was ready," he said. "In the fifth and sixth grades I was lifting weights. I wanted to be the fullback, the featured running back in the wing-T."

At the time, the Conneaut staff had a 150-pound limit for backs of that age. Anyone heavier than that had to play the line, and he weighed 153 just before the weigh-in.

Showalter had learned some tricks about losing

weight at the last minute from some of the Conneaut wrestlers, but he wasn't sure he made it down to 150 and didn't look at the scale.

"They said, '150 pounds, you're a running back,'" Showalter said.

He took their word for it.

He had already, with his brother, practiced taking handoffs and running traps and belly plays.

"I lived for Conneaut football," he said.

When he reached the ninth grade, Rollie Mushrush was his coach. Showalter's best friend Erik ("Juice") Hunt, was lined up at quarterback. Showalter himself was put in the tight end line.

"I said, 'I'm a fullback,'" Showalter said. "'You can give it a try,' Mushrush responded."

"He watched what chemistry we had with handoffs," Showalter said. "I wanted to make sure I didn't get tackled. I wouldn't stop until the coach blew the whistle. I had a great (junior varsity) year. Coach Eager was always supportive and encouraging."

After his freshman year, Showalter again lifted weights in preparation for the following fall.

"I knew John Salters, the incumbent at fullback, was coming back. Pete Harris, a great runner, was the halfback."

Showalter's work in the weight room impressed upperclassmen like his brother Scott, Marty Peaspanen, Scott Bartone and Jim Lucas. They accepted him.

When Salters graduated early, the position was open. It became Showalter's.

"The Good Lord blessed me with the ability to match my desire," he said.

As focused as he was, Showalter had goals: to be a leader, to be a captain, to be successful. And a big one at that.

"I had undefeated in my mind," he said.

The Spartans had a huge line that year: Peaspanen, Scott Saylor, Bartone, Rollie Ciarelli, Lucas and Gary Bleffin, all of whom ranged were between 6-foot to 6-3 and from 220-275 pounds.

Quarterback Dusty Kaczoroski led the offense at quarterback and was joined by Harris and Showalter. Boyd Griffith and Mo Wofford were the wide receivers.

Showalter admitted to being nervous before his first varsity game.

"Pete (Harris) looked at me and said, 'Show, I'm all-county and you're running with me, so we're both going to be all-county,'" Showalter recalled. "That shook my nerves off."

"With all those seniors, all I had to do was show up and play, work hard and be dependable. My brother Scott was a defensive end on that team. He didn't play football until his senior year. The most important thing to me is relationships. Scott and I always gave each other a high five or low five when we went from offense to defense."

Showalter and Harris meshed. Showalter had 60 yards rushing and 40 yards receiving in that first game against Campbell.

There were good games. Against St. John the Spartans rolled up 62 points with the first team playing only the first half. Harris had 174 yards in that duration and Showalter added 130-plus on 13 carries.

There were tough games, too, such as playing Ashtab-

See **SHOWALTER**, Page 18

C & S

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Receiver captained '75 Geneva team

DAN CRAINE



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:** Geneva High School.
 ■ **GRADUATION YEAR:** 1975
 ■ **POSITION:** Wide receiver; defensive back

By **CHRIS LARICK**
 For the Star Beacon

Like many other teams, the Geneva Eagles have a tradition of coming out of the locker room pumped up, jumping up and down and then onto each other, forming a pile. When Bob Herpy was head coach, he topped the pile.

“I could never figure that out,” said Dan Craine, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club Hall of Fame Dec. 8 at Mount Carmel Community Center. “One would think he had to hurt himself once or twice, but he never showed it. After the first time, I moved to the opposite side where Coach (Dick) Pierce would hide.”

Craine was an outstanding wide receiver on the Geneva teams of 1974 and 1975 (a co-captain as a senior), joining teammates Randy Hartz, quarterback; Gary Munson (co-captain), fullback/linebacker; Steve Merrell (co-captain) tight end/linebacker; Rick Gaylord, running back; Willie DeJesus running back/defensive back; and John Montgomery, running back.

DeJesus and Craine would later room together at Baldwin-Wallace.

“There were a lot of really great guys in the Class of 1975,” Craine said. “We had a lot of fun and enjoyed each other. The offensive line was a tough group, I wish I could remember all of their names. Without them Randy Hartz would have never been able to get the ball out to his receivers.”

That group was coached by Herpy and assistants Tom Koehler, Dick Hunt and Dick Pierce.

“Coach Pierce coached the split ends and wide-outs, so we had a special relationship,” Craine said. “He was very motivated and you just really wanted to play for him. He had a great sense of humor and you could tell he really cared a lot about all of us.”

Craine began his football career in pickup games around the neighborhood, with his brother, Don, and other boys in the neighborhood.

“The biggest problem for me, although maybe it was a godsend, was that I was usually the smallest guy out there, unless one of



Submitted Photo

DAN CRAINE was a standout receiver for the great Geneva teams of the mid-70s.

my buddies showed up to play,” he said.

Like so many other Eagles, Craine later played in the Geneva Midget League, at least after some hesitation on his parents’ part.

“I remember sitting at the kitchen table with the family and telling them a lot of my friends were talking about playing in the midget league football program,” Craine said. “I begged my dad to let me play. At first, he did not want me to play. He eventually came around and let me play, bought me a helmet from a sporting goods store. He must have not trusted the helmets the midget league program was issuing, but I was headed to play football.

“The name of our team was the Colts. The coach was Bill Hope and my father decided he would help coach. My first position was on the offensive line and I was given No. 51. I’m not exactly sure how successful we were, however, I remember playing at the Geneva Memorial Stadium and catching a winning touchdown pass late in the game.”

When Craine moved on to junior high school football. He doesn’t remember much about those years except for something he might not want to.

“The one thing I do remember is playing a

freshman game at Jefferson,” he said. “I was running the football up the sidelines and was chased out of bounds by one of the defenders. Bad news for me was that the ‘chain gang’ with the metal chains and poles forgot to get out of the way, and I went down hard. I remember getting up and not knowing where I was. I believe this was the first of my three concussions.”

Craine was more interested in basketball than football during that time.

“I really became a basketball nut,” he said. “I was so crazy about playing that during the winter I would go out at our house and clear all the snow and ice off the driveway just so I could dribble and shoot the ball. During the summer there were a lot of guys who would play basketball down behind the junior high school, which was a full court with lights. I remember I would ride my bike down there just to see if I could get in on a game. Obviously, there were a lot of older guys who would come down to play, so there were times I would just have to sit and wait my turn.”

More interested in playing basketball, he didn’t play football as a sophomore for a couple of reasons.

“One was my love of basketball and thinking I could play at the next level,” he said. “The problem with that is I was only six-feet tall and with no three-point line back then... well, need I say more?”

“Another reason, and I guess it’s safe to say it now, does anyone remember the football team of 1973? My older brother was part of that class and wow, those guys were big, fast, and mean. Why would anyone want to be a tackling dummy with that group? So, I took to the sidelines and became the stat boy for the 1973 season. I had the best seat in the house and enjoyed a great season.”

His junior year he did go out and played split end/wide receiver and defensive back. Herpy coached the defensive backs and Pierce was the split end/wide receivers coach. The starter at that position broke his wrist that year and Craine became a starter.

“My mother remembers that I suffered three concussions during my playing career,” Craine said. “The one I remember the most was one which occurred during a game at Madison. I was playing defensive back and the Madison quarterback took off

Freeman's switch paid off

QB's move from court to gridiron helped lead Lakers to success

By **CHRIS LARICK**
For the Star Beacon

Sean Freeman had not even considered playing football when Pymatuning Valley football coach Ken Parise saw him playing basketball and set out to recruit him.

"He pursued me, along with coach Perry Nikolas," Freeman says of Parise. "I had no interest in playing football. But (Parise) knew me as an athlete. He saw me throw a ball and said I had to go out for football. I said, 'All right, I'll do it.' I was a little reluctant... I give him credit for getting me to do something that I wouldn't have tried otherwise. I'm thankful for that."

Parise's pursuit of Freeman paid huge dividends. As a quarterback for the Lakers, he led them to a 9-1 record as a senior in 1989 and was named Star Beacon Ashtabula County Offensive Back of the Year as a junior and senior. He shattered the school passing record (formerly 1,017 yards) as a senior with 2,091 yards and 23 touchdowns. For his career he threw for 4,641 yards and 48 touchdowns.

Freeman, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club Hall of Fame on Dec. 8 at Mount Carmel Community Center, made all-state as a junior and senior. The Plain Dealer rated him as one of the top six quarterbacks

SEAN FREEMAN



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:**
Pymatuning Valley High School.
■ **GRADUATION YEAR:** 1990
■ **POSITION:**
Quarterback

in the state during that time.

One of Freeman's favorite targets was Gordie Hitchcock, already a member of the Hall of Fame. He also threw a slew of passes to David Dick, Brian McNamara, Mark Pittsingser and running back Christian Paye.

"He was a very good running back but he also caught a lot of passes out of the backfield," Freeman said of Paye.

"When I was a senior, we had a heck of a line — Shane Blanford, Brad and Brian Dernek, Rollin Johnson, Chad Dunbar and Frank White."

To Freeman, Parise set the tone.

"He was an aggressive coach," Freeman said. "He had played professional football at some level and brought a way of playing and a way of excitement. He brought in some guys who had had some success there before."

"Before our junior year we had played some smaller schools. Only the top four teams (in each division's region) could get into the playoffs then. In our junior year we beefed up our schedule and played bigger schools for computer points. That set the tone for the next year (Freeman's senior season) when we went 9-1."

Of Parise, Freeman added, "He saw something in me. Up to that

time there wasn't a ton of passing at PV. I had seen (Conneaut's Mark) Wheeler, how good he was, another lefty, tall like me. He had played Division I football. I give (Parise) credit for opening up the offense, letting me pass the ball. We could've been a running team. We worked at (passing) once we saw what we could do. Our guys put in some effort on that."

Just last year, Freeman was inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation's hall of fame. Hoops was the game he probably invested the most time and effort in. That started in Conneaut, not Andover.

The son of Conneaut principal Paul Freeman, a member of the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame, Sean loved attending the Spartan basketball games as a youngster.

"I have a lot of respect for Ashtabula County high school basketball," said Freeman. "My brother Brett played three varsity years at Conneaut and was kind of my childhood hero. I was probably the last child of the pre-technical era."

He played junior high ball at Rowe in the seventh and eighth grades and started on the varsity team at PV as a freshman from his second game on, playing for coach Bob Hitchcock.

The Lakers won 12 of their last 16 games that year to win the GRC with a team that started only one senior.

That season paved the way for one of the school's best years ever, Freeman's sophomore year, when the Lakers won their first 22 games



Submitted Photo

SEAN FREEMAN, current day, with his 5-year-old son, Daniel.

before Hawken beat them in overtime in the district tournament.

The team had size with Freeman (about 6-3 at the time), Steve Oman, Jason Poole and Gordy Hitchcock. It had the shooting of Doug Hitchcock and Rod Brown and the playmaking of Hitchcock.

Pymatuning Valley moved to the East Suburban Conference Freeman's senior year (1989-1990), where they faced tougher competi-

tion in the likes of Berkshire, Kirtland and others. Still, the Lakers wound up second.

Freeman scored 1,301 points during his high school career, the seventh-highest total for all boys players in county history.

He was also selected by the Regional Press as a player on the Dream Team of the Decade for the

See FREEMAN, Page 16



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Severino led Heralds' lines

Lineman was key on several strong St. John teams

By **CHRIS LARICK**

For the Star Beacon

Ron Severino never saw it coming.

Never saw the clip that ended his football career, that is.

Severino had so impressed the University of Arizona coaching staff while playing at MiraCosta Junior College in California they signed him to a scholarship.

But in his first season there, Severino, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club Hall of Fame on Dec. 8 at Mount Carmel Community Center, forgot to take one precaution.

"In those days the line of scrimmage was a legal clip zone," Severino recalls. "I was playing outside linebacker and was in a blitz. When I blitzed, there was no one there to pick me up. In that situation, we were supposed to drop to our knees since it was possible someone would hit me from the side.

"I didn't drop to my knees and someone came in and took me down pretty good."

The hit resulted in damage to three knee ligaments and all the cartilage in that knee. Severino had surgery on the knee and went through rehabilitation.

"I came back and tried to play, but I couldn't play," he said. "The knee had turned all the way around (on the hit). They told me at the time they didn't think I'd be able to come back."

Severino, a 1966 St. John graduate, had begun playing football at Mount Carmel. At the time the county had a parochial league and Mount Carmel played schools like St. Joseph and St. Mary. Those schools would play each other in tackle football every Sunday during the season. Mount Carmel also played flag football in the City League on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

"We always won that," Severino said. "I played defensive end and rushed the passer. I was on the ball a lot."

Severino went on to play on a good St. John team, coached by Dan McGinnis. That team had several standouts, including players like Denny Allen, Bob Sposito, Joe Coroa, Norm Dominico, Bob DeMay and



Submitted Photo

RON SEVERINO, pictured with his granddaughters Gabriella and Stella.

Terry Melaragno.

"We had a lot of good players," Severino said. "Denny Allen was a year older than me. He was a great player."

"(McGinnis) was a great coach. I think he had a heart condition, though. He was a technical coach, not much of a speaker. He had some good assistants in Ron DeTireo, Don Cannell and Gene Pushic, who went on to coach Bernie Kosar at Boardman.

"Steve Crest was the quarterback my senior year. I think we ran the ball more than we threw it. We were city champions

from 1964 to 1966 and NEC champs in '64 and '65. We were the smallest school in the city, but we were very competitive."

Football was the only sport Severino competed in at St. John, except for one year when he played basketball. Playing offensive and defensive tackle at 6 foot 2 and 225 pounds, he was all-Ashtabula County and all-NEC and earned honorable mention all-Ohio status.

From high school Severino went to MiraCosta, where, in his one year there, the team won its league's junior college cham-

RON SEVERINO



■ **HIGH SCHOOL:** St. John High School.
 ■ **GRADUATION YEAR:** 1966
 ■ **POSITION:** Linebacker

pionship. They went on to play for the state championship in California, but were beaten, 17-13.

"I was defensive player of the year there," Severino said. "I made (Junior College) honorable mention All-American."

After that year, he hoped to hook on with UCLA, but that didn't work out. Instead, Arizona picked him up, where he suffered his career-ending knee injury.

He was majoring in history, but never finished his degree work.

"I couldn't play football anymore," he said. "I thought I would do something else."

Severino returned to California, where he had gone right after high school.

"I didn't stay around Ashtabula," he said. "By August of 1966, I was in California and I never came back. I've got nine siblings and some of them still live there."

He began working in the construction business.

"I enjoyed that," he said. "I liked carpentry work. I had done that for a long time since my dad, Steve, was a contractor."

Severino worked for a company for three years, then got his license as a contractor and branched out on his own in 1970.

His company, Severino Construction, which once employed as many as seven people, builds houses in and around San Diego. He is in the process of finishing his last house before retirement.

"We build custom houses, of about 5,000 square feet," he said. "They sell for about a million two or a million three.

"It's always 70 degrees here," he said. "It's beautiful now. But I don't remember the last time it rained. We're in the third year of a severe drought."

His first marriage lasted for 18 years and produced three daughters: Anna, 41, who manages a cosmetics store; Gina, 38, who works at a fish house; and Maria, 36, who is a real estate agent. He has two grandchildren, Gabriella and Stella. All of his children live near him in Carlsbad, Calif..

After being single from 1988 to 2003, Severino remarried (Barbara), who passed away in 2010.

Freeman

From Page 14

1980s.

“I was very honored to be named as one of the top 10 basketball players in county history by the Star Beacon,” Freeman said. “I was very humbled by that mention.”

One of his proudest accomplishments was being runner-up to eventual Ohio State star Robert Smith as Northeast Ohio Athlete of the Year.

After high school, Freeman had a chance to play Division I football, but didn’t really consider it.

In baseball he had set the Pymatuning Valley career highs for home runs (21) and RBI (90) after his junior year.

College coaches wanted Freeman to play football exclusively. Freeman wanted to play baseball.

“It was a stressful time,” he said. “Ohio State was involved. So were Bowling Green and Georgia Tech. It was a crazy time.”

One of the deciding factors was the college football itself, which was larger than the high school version.

“I didn’t have big hands for my size,” he said. “I wasn’t sure I could throw the college ball 50 or 60 yards. And I really wanted to give college baseball a shot.”

Kent State wanted Freeman as a baseball player. Eventually, that’s where he wound up.

He had pitched and played first base in high school. At Kent, he became a full-time first baseman.

“I ended up playing first base all four years,” he said. “I’ve been inducted into the Kent State University baseball Hall of Fame.”

Over his career at Kent, Freeman had a batting average of .333 and held the doubles record in addition to the record for most games played.

He was drafted by the Detroit Tigers in 1994 and wound up five or six classes short of a degree, spending four years in the Tigers’ system, five overall in the Minor Leagues.

In Class AA Jacksonville in 1996, he was part of a team that won a championship. The following year he went to spring training with the Tigers, but was injured and never played in a Major League game.

After years of back problems, Freeman had intensive back surgery.

“It was a five- or six-hour surgery,” he said. “They cut out three vertebrae in my spine. It’s been a couple of tough years for me. I had a tumor pressing against a major blood vessel.”

“It’s been a recurring issue. I take pain shots,” he said. “Some mornings aren’t good. I have tension I’ve never had before. I’m not in a wheelchair, but at times it gets so painful I have to lie down.”

Freeman has a son, Daniel, 5. He moved back to the Andover area a couple of years ago.

Schulte

From Page 4

we did a great job. I’ll never forget that.”

The Mariners finished 8-2 that year, beating Geneva but getting beat by St. John, 8-7, in the wind and mud at Wenner Field after a Harbor punt went backward in the wind.

Harbor had a good offensive line, with Doug Stranman, Dave Powers, Raimo Kangas, John Radkowski and Kelly Prine. It had great skill players in Schulte, Hood, Tom Skarlinski, John Ringer, Bob Raffa, Alex Raffa, Romero Siler.

The Mariners also boasted a talented coach in Platano, who wasn’t afraid to take chances.

“He and (Harbor basketball coach) John Higgins were very influential in my life, right up to this day,” Schulte said. “They coached and motivated me and had belief

Koschar

From Page 9

To rest some of the other players, Koschar sometimes got into the game on defense.

“I would rather have been there,” he said. “I had a blast doing it. If somebody went down, I had to fill in.”

Most of the time in that undefeated season of 1976, the wins came easily. About the only tough game was a 13-7 victory over Harbor that went down to the end.

The game that was supposed to be the Eagles’ toughest didn’t turn out that way at all.

Geneva and St. John went into 1976’s ninth game both undefeated.

“I’ve heard there were well over 10,000 people at that game (at Geneva),” Koschar said. “There were a lot of people standing up on that hill by the cemetery.

“We pretty much blew them out, 42-6 or so. That was a big highlight of the season.

“We came together that game. We always talked about it. They picked (St. John) to win in the newspaper. That was a fireball. Coach Herpy

in me. They motivated me in a positive way. That goes a long way.

“Our senior year (Platano) went out and researched BYU’s offense. He put in a whole new offense for us. We were very good at the skill positions.

“In the passing game we would pre-read. I always had three options, always had an outlet to go to. I think coach Platano was ahead of the game in innovative offenses. We had the swinging gate (on extra points) before anyone else.”

As good a quarterback as Schulte was, he may have been a better point guard in basketball. In fact, Georgia Tech recruited him when the Mariners played Ashtabula and said later, on the phone, that they were going to offer him a scholarship. The head coach got fired, though, and the offer was pulled.

“I thought about playing hoops in college, but I needed a scholarship,” Schulte said. “My parents weren’t in a position to send me. It got to the end of the season and West Virginia Wesleyan lost a quarterback and offered me a scholarship. I

always gave emotional speeches, but when St. John came in, he just stared at us, didn’t say much. We fed off that.”

The Eagles were so united that when it came to choosing an MVP, they balked.

“We couldn’t pick one,” Koschar said. “We said it should go to everyone, even the underclassmen. They were a great, great group of guys. We couldn’t vote Greg Wilcox, even though he had all those yards, because of what was in front of him. You could have run the ball then.”

Even after all these years and living in Florida, Koschar looks back on those days as some of the best in his life.

“I was just so very fortunate growing up in Geneva, Ohio,” he said. “I was very fortunate to have the group of guys for friends that I had, the group of coaches that I had, even the principals supported us.

“It was a great setting and we had a ton of support from our families. The spirit of football throughout the community was out of control, the best I’ve ever seen, with nothing else close to duplicating it.”

Koschar comes from

divorced parents. His father, Richard Sr., had worked at Reliance Electric and passed away in 2010. His mother lives in Mississippi. He has four sisters — Beth, Carrie, Meg and Jill.

After he graduated he went to the University of Ediboro on a football scholarship. He played in just five games as a freshman because of an injury, then started at center for three years.

“We weren’t really successful,” he said of his time with the Fighting Scots. “One year we went 8-2. I made second team all-conference my sophomore year, first-team my junior year. If we had beat Clarion my junior year we would have gone to a bowl game, but it didn’t happen.”

After changing his major twice, he took a degree in and physical education.

“I didn’t find a job right away, so I started a business in Pittsburgh,” he said. “The next year I took a physical education job at Geneva Elementary for three years. I coached track at the high school. I had done the high jump, mile and shot put in high school. I’m a go-getter; I’ll try anything.”

had nothing else concrete, so I took it.”

His freshman year he played in five games, some of it as a quarterback, some at fullback. He wasn’t happy.

“They ran the veer and I wanted to throw the ball,” Schulte said. “I had filled out to over 200 pounds at 6-2 so I could run, but I wanted to sit back and throw.”

His dissatisfaction led to the transfer to Ohio Wesleyan.

He did get to throw occasionally, when his team got behind.

“Back then, if you threw it 20-25 times a game you were airing it out,” he said.

When he graduated from college, his first job was at a newspaper, the Charlotte Observer in North Carolina for a short time before returning to Ashtabula to take his first radio job at 102-ZOO, beginning in sales. Within six months he was named sales manager and in nine or 10 months, general manager.

“I’ve been a General Manager-Vice President ever since, until about five years later, when I became President of the Media One Group,” he said.

When it appeared that he would be laid off after three years, he saw an ad for teachers in Florida. He interviewed in Palm Beach County in Fla. and accepted a job at Forest Hills High School. After one year there, he was laid off, but landed a job at South Area High School in Lakeland, Fla., where he spent 12 years. Koschar then got out of teaching for a while and started his own business installing kitchens.

In 2002 he returned to teaching and coaching at Glade Central in Florida.

“We have a lot of (football) talent there,” he said. “I taught a lot of players in the NFL now — Santonio Holmes, Fred Taylor, James Lee, Diante Thompson and the Browns’ Travis Benjamin.”

Koschar has coached cross country, tennis, wrestling and football.

Now divorced, he has two daughters, Alica, 34, and Tia, 30.

While he was in his 30s, he ran triathlons, but has given that up.

“I do stay in shape, though, run three or four times a week,” he said.

Takacs

From Page 5

as a junior to second-team All-Ohio at a linebacker as a senior.

He also won four varsity letters in wrestling and qualified for state twice in that sport. He added two letters in track and one in baseball.

“I made it to the state my junior and senior years at 171 pounds,” he said. “My sophomore year I separated my shoulder at districts. I had wrestled since kindergarten at Painesville, then here in the Pee Wee program with Mr. Cole and John Mikus.”

After graduation, Takacs visited a few colleges, but eventually decided the academic life was not for him.

“At the time I wanted to learn life skills,” he said. “I served my country from February 1989 to 1993.”

He entered the U.S. Marine Corps, doing his basic training at Parris Island, then his schooling at LeJeune, N.C. He was serving in Erie with the reserves when Operation Desert Storm began.

He was assigned to drive a heavy truck used as a refueler.

“I had diesel fuel in the back of my truck,” he said. “That was a nice target. We got shot at by the artillery, but nothing connected, thank goodness.”

Of course, Operation Desert Storm went about as well as a war possibly can, at least for the U.S. troops.

“It was only about three days,” Takacs said. “It was a mass movement of people and equipment. We hung out forever, were always moving, but the ground war only took about three days. Our job there was to liberate Kuwait. That’s what we did there.”

In 1993, Takacs decided to get on with his life.

“It was just time to move

on,” he said. “I just had to get to work, do my thing. I met my wife (Renee Radinsky, a 1984 Grand Valley graduate) here in Orwell and we started having children.”

Takacs reclaimed the job at Chardon Rubber Company he had left to join the Marines and worked there until 2004. He then worked construction in Middlefield before accepting a job at Kennametal in Orwell, where he continues to work as a maintenance technician.

“I get work orders to fix something in the building or machinery, fix electric and hydraulics,” he said. “It’s always something different, not the same old, same old.”

Takacs, the son of Jane and James (both deceased) has five siblings — Jim, Mary Jane, Jason, Jennifer and Jessica. Jeff and Renee have given birth to three children — Abigail, who plays basketball, softball and volleyball as a sophomore at Grand Valley; Clayton, who plays quarterback on the Mustangs’ eighth-grade team and wrestles; and Madison, who plays basketball and softball as a sixth-grader at Grand Valley Junior High.

Clayton played his last game of the season recently against Mathews.

“Mathews has 12 kids on its roster,” Takacs said. “We beat them 56-0 and put the seventh graders in early. We had 50-plus kids out there.”

Takacs coached Clayton in football in earlier years (along with Chutas, whose nephew was on the same team) and was a wrestling coach for the junior high team for five years until he was replaced by a teacher in the system.

His philosophy about football, the game he loves, has remained constant through the years.

“It’s a game that’s not about statistics, it’s about what’s in your heart and what’s in your mind,” he said.

Toukonen

From Page 5

changes things. The next year there were more out, and when I was a senior there were about 45.”

Still, with skilled players like Randy Park and Chris Wilson (a speedster who finished second in the 800 at the state track meet as a senior), the Falcons went 6-3-1 that year. Toukonen played offensive and defensive tackle next to John Workman, a standout.

“I played every down,” Toukonen said of his stints at offensive tackle and defensive lineman. “Playing beside John (Workman) when I was a sophomore helped a lot with my blocking.”

“You could do a lot more then. You could throw and roll three times right across their hips. Crack-back blocks were allowed. So were head slaps.”

The Falcons played a Wing-T on offense, with an emphasis on running the ball.

“We didn’t do a lot of passing,” Toukonen said. “We did a lot of trap blocking. We ran a stunting Oklahoma on defense. We had some older guys on my sophomore team, guys like Mike Nugent and Tim Brenneman. Jim Baker was a year older than me.”

Jefferson went 6-3-1 when Toukonen was a sophomore in 1975, then 9-1 and 7-3. In the Grand River Conference with Jefferson, Fairport, Perry, Ledgemont, Grand Valley and Pymatuning Valley, the Falcons tied for the championship with Fairport, then quarterbacked by future Ohio State and San Francisco 49er punter Tom Orosz, his junior season before winning it in his senior year.

Louys

From Page 7

shooter, he won the International Border Agency Day Most Valuable Competitor award, along with the IBA Shooting Team trophy.

Although he retired from the FBI, Louys was not ready to stop working. Holding a bachelor degree in history from Marietta and masters of social studies from Mississippi College, he became the Director of

After graduating, Toukonen entered Ohio State, walking on to the wrestling team. A recurring neck injury, a stinger, was bothering him and his classes were demanding, so after a few practices, he gave up that pursuit.

“They were about eighth in the country that year,” Toukonen said. “I was majoring in education. I came home for the summer and got in a car accident. I had to pay my medical bills.”

During that summer Toukonen received an offer to work at Rockwell in Louisville, Kentucky where he worked as a maintenance man for seven years. When that plant closed, he moved back to northeastern Ohio, taking a job as a teacher’s aide at Happy Hearts School.

“When I was in Kentucky, I worked for the Society for Handicapped Children, and that got me interested in that field,” he said. “I kind of pursued it from there. I’ve been back here since 1989.”

Toukonen took a job at Homestead, a rehabilitation facility, in the evenings, and eventually got hired on a full-time basis. He is now a Qualified Intellectual Disabilities Professional (QIDP), working with the disabled.

“I find work for them in the community, deal with their need for housing and money management,” he said. “I deal with their transition to independence, teach them things like how to go to the bank and cash checks. It’s a challenge.”

Toukonen’s family has owned a dairy farm near Jefferson for many years. His grandfather emigrated here from Finland in 1911. One of his uncles, Martin, was a professional boxer who once beat an Olympian, but was disqualified as an amateur because he won a \$10 prize for boxing 10 bouts in a single day.

Toukonen is one of eight children of

Reino and Grace Toukonen, both of whom have now passed away. In addition to Alex, the Toukonens gave birth to Dale, Eric, Dane, Sally, Judy, Elizabeth and Karen.

“My mom and dad were fantastic,” Toukonen said. “They had 54 cows. There was a lot of work, but they gave us all the opportunity to go to college. And we all had the opportunity to play sports, too. My brothers were all-GRC and all-county athletes, too, and wrestled in college.”

“My sister Sally was a heck of an athlete. She played field hockey at Kent State University. Once when we were playing football (in the neighborhood) I remember Sally hitting Dale really hard when he was going for the football. Sally was 17 years older than me and was like a mom to me. She was always there for me.”

Of the other siblings, Toukonen said his brothers Dale and Dane were all-county athletes. Eric went on to become an Ohio Hall of Fame wrestling coach at Urichville Claymont High School. Elizabeth is an administrator at Bellefonte in Pennsylvania, near Penn State College.

Sally Toukonen Dulak, who became Geneva’s first head girls basketball coach, came down with Parkinson’s Disease and passed away a couple of years ago.

Alex, now 46, has been married, but is now divorced. He has a partner, Tonya Cardona, a 2002 Geneva graduate who works as a nurse at Homestead with him.

Tonya has two children and she and Alex attend their soccer games and other activities.

“I also like to fish and hunt rabbits and deer,” he said. “I don’t have time to get out there a lot, though.”

Petroleum Products Inspection Division in Mississippi’s Department of Agriculture and Commerce, retiring from that position recently. In 1997 he became Adjunct Professor in Mississippi College’s history department and, in 2006, he took an identical position at Hinds County Community College. He continues to serve in both capacities as a professor of western civilization and American history.

“I enjoy it,” he said. “I love history. I’ve always been very honored that (the col-

leges) even considered me.”

He is also proud of the service he has done with the Boy Scouts of America. Having been affiliated with that group for 30 years, he has been honored with a Boy Scout of America Award. He led one of the largest troops in Mississippi during that period, attended the Philmont Boy Scout Ranch in Raton, N.M. three times and obtained his Wood Badge Award. His son, Boomer, is an Eagle Scout.

Louys married Marie (Welsh) in 1970. The couple

has three children: Danielle, Robert Jr. (Boomer) and Shannon, who have given them four grandchildren: Elliot, Gavin, Madelyn and Joshua. The Louys reside in Brandon, Miss.

Among the people he met and played with and against in high school, Louys most cherishes people like Dennis DeGennaro, whom he’ll enter the hall of fame with, Vaughn Tittle, Lou Winsyai, Mike Castrillo, Dave Berkowitz, Ed Miller, Tommy McGill and Gene Platano.

Dinger

From Page 6

with Frank Armeni, Jeremy Bunnell, Ben Hoffman, Seth Walbridge, Chris Newcomb, Tim Kennedy and Jay Georgia, but surprisingly received few college offers for that sport. Edinboro did offer him a scholarship for football, though.

“My first year I was redshirted,” he remembered. “To practice and never play was hard after playing every single down in high school.

“After that, I played sparingly, got in a few plays early in my redshirt freshman year. I started the last 2.5 or 3 years of college. You pretty much have to pay your dues.”

The Fighting Scots ran multiple offensive sets, so on certain plays no wide receivers were used and on others four or five wide receivers were on the field.

“We won the conference (the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference) three times and went to the national playoffs twice but lost,” Dinger said. “We were always 9-1 or 9-2.

“I got to play with coach (Jim) Henson (former Grand Valley coach). He’s still there. When I was there, he coached the running backs. He’s a good guy.”

At Edinboro, Dinger got his degree in health and physical education and sports administration, graduating in 2006.

When he graduated, he took a job as a counselor at a youth detention center in Meadville, Pa., where he worked for four or five years. He then took a position in sales for Utz Quality Foods.

Dinger recently took a job in Florida, for Pepsico, which makes Pepsi, as a sales representative.

He moved there, just outside of Orlando with his girlfriend, Sara Baney.

“We’ve been together almost 10 years,” said Dinger, now 31 years old, of Baney. “We met in college. She took a teaching job down here.”

Dinger has stayed active, playing in basketball leagues for a while, going to the gym and is now heavily into cross-fitness.

“I’m always working out,” he said. “I always try to play basketball when I get a chance.”

“I always played basketball in open gyms at Edinboro. When I was redshirted in football, I thought about quitting since we weren’t very good, but the coach talked me out of it. Then we started winning and I ended up starting.”

Dinger is happy he got to play with a couple of individuals from Ashtabula County, Tommy Davidson from Geneva and Justin Lipscomb from Grand Valley.

“Tommy was a really good player at Edinboro at safety,” he said. “Justin was probably the best wide receiver on our team when I was there.”

Showalter

From Page 12

ula, which featured Sean Allgood at quarterback and Brian Scruggs at running back.

“That Ashtabula game was the hardest-hitting game I ever played in,” Showalter said. “I loved it. My knees were black and blue after that game. We lost that game, but I loved it.”

There were lessons, like the time Showalter took a belly play outside after he had been told never to do that. Eager yelled at Showalter and he never did it again.

Conneaut went 6-4 that year, not quite what Showalter had hoped for. But he gained 920 yards as a sophomore, third in the county to PV’s Christian Payne and Scruggs.

With most of the team leaving because of graduation (only Showalter and Kaczoroski returned as starters) his junior year was tougher.

“Dusty could throw the ball

through a brick wall,” Showalter recalls. “I was a fullback, but our linemen had no experience and we couldn’t run the ball well.”

So Showalter became a pass-catcher.

“I could catch the ball and run routes,” Showalter, then 6-0, 185 or 190, said. “We had Boyd (Griffith) at wide receiver and me out wide. I was a fullback but ended up third in the conference in receptions.”

Running the ball was more difficult for Showalter that junior season because of a severely sprained ankle he incurred. He wore a brace, but it slowed him down.

The Spartans’ lack of a consistent offense resulted in them going just 3-7 that year.

Showalter had not come close to the 10-0 season that was his goal. On the other hand, Kaczoroski had graduated, so his best friend, Erik Hunt (“Juice”) would finally get his chance to play quarterback. There would also be three experienced senior linemen to help out — Jason Coe, Matt Penna and Jim Feathers. The guards were under-

graduates — Brian Bartlett and Darrell Thomas. When Barlett was injured freshman Duane Burdick, possibly weighing 140 pounds, took over.

“We plugged him in and never missed a beat,” Showalter said.

Showalter rushed for 1,088 yards that season, eclipsing Murzynski’s record. He added 260 receiving yards on 15 or so catches and was voted the team’s MVP. Conneaut went 5-5 that season, far from his expectations.

He was granted a scholarship to Clarion, but sprained an ankle in camp. When he returned to practice, he felt a numbness in his arm while blocking. The team did an MRI and EKG but found nothing wrong.

He transferred to Baldwin-Wallace and discovered he had two damaged vertebrae in his neck. If he continued to play football, he would have risked partial paralysis. His career was over.

“Two great things came out of football,” Showalter said. “I learned I have two of the most loving and supporting parents you

could ask for. They never missed an athletic event.

“And if not for football I wouldn’t have heard of Clarion University.”

That’s significant, he explained, because he met his wife there. When they met at Clarion, he and Karen Maddix were good friends. When he left, they lost communication with each other.

For some unknown reason, 14 years later, out of the blue, he thought of Karen.

“I wondered what had happened to her,” he said. “I found out she was a professional woman living in Pittsburgh. I was single — she was single. We dated two years and have been married five years.

“If nothing else came out of (my experience at) Clarion, the most important thing in my life did.”

Showalter works as a carpenter and house builder for G. Anderson Contracting.

“I’ve always enjoyed carpentry,” he said. “I loved creating with my hands as well as my brain. For the most part, that’s what I’ve done all these years.”

Olin

From Page 8

Not long afterward Olin saw Orr in the hallway but ignored him.

“He called me into his office and said, ‘What’s wrong?’” Olin recalls. “I told him that the seniors said ‘If they (the offenders) don’t start, we don’t start. We came this far together and we consider ourselves one team.’”

“He had already ordered the patches that said 10-0. If the seniors hadn’t played, we wouldn’t have much of a chance.”

All the seniors started and the Mariners defeated Wickliffe, 34-6, to clinch their unbeaten season.

Starting as a right guard and middle guard, Olin also played on special teams.

“A lot of times in my junior and senior years, I never left the field except for halftime,” he said. “What really made us good was we had a lot of depth at all positions. If I messed up, I knew there were two or three other guys to take my place.”

According to Olin, Orr started the best players. Because he was so small, Olin lifted weights after practices at the YMCA. He also had a regimen of 100 pushups and 300 situps every day for three years. He wrestled for a couple of years, but had no real talent for the sport. He was doing it for the conditioning.

Olin would later coach with Orr at Ashtabula, along with fellow assistants Buddy Candela,

Jerry Raffenaud, Otis Sandidge, Dom Iarocci and Lillvis. Olin, self-employed as a carpenter, found Orr’s seven-day-per-week schedule impossible and served only one year with Orr. Then the Benjy Ramirez scandal broke, costing Orr that job.

“They kind of blamed Orr,” Olin said. “I didn’t see that presence with the kids. I never did hear anything about steroids then. Benjy was a really nice kid. I was saddened by that.”

After graduating, Olin moved on to Wilmington College, between Columbus and Cincinnati. He wanted to become an industrial arts teacher and Wilmington was one of the few places that offered that program and at the same time was small enough that Olin could play football there.

He played two years there, but didn’t start. He played on the scout team and got into a few games.

“I used to terrorize the first team when I played on the scout team,” he said. “People would say, ‘Lighten up,’ but I was trying to impress the coaches.”

When the Quakers signed guards much bigger than Olin, he saw the writing on the wall.

“It was a tough road,” he said. “I decided to concentrate on academics.”

Wilmington had a tremendous athletic facility since the Cincinnati Bengals used the college for summer training, including a huge swimming pool. Olin loved the water and took up scuba diving. When he returned to Ashtabula after graduating with his degree in industrial arts in 1973, he became a scuba diving instruc-

tor. Needing a break from academics, he worked in industry for one year.

In the fall of 1974 he took a job as an industrial arts teacher at the Ashtabula Joint Vocational School (now named ATech) for a year, then started his own construction company. He’s been in construction in one way or another since.

He returned to teaching in 2004 at the vocational school again for one year, then went back to it in 2007 and has been working at ATech since.

“One of our projects was the covered bridge in Geneva,” he said.

Always busy, he recently finished a remodeling of a house in Eastlake and helped a friend build a house. He has also been in the county water rescue unit since 1971, using his talents as a scuba diver. He is now the head of that unit.

“I’ve been involved in drownings and rescues,” he said.

When a boy drowned in Saybrook about one year ago, he was the one who found the body.

“I’ve recovered numerous bodies over the years,” he said.

He also works the annual Polar Bear Plunge — just in case his abilities are needed.

One of the founders of the Ancient Mariners with Brian Gaines, Jim Henry and Roger Goudy, he works to keep the knowledge and traditions of Harbor sports alive.

Twice married, he has two stepchildren in Zachary and Sidney Betonte.

“I’m in their lives,” he said. “I took Sidney to her first kindergarten class.”

Craine

From Page 13

on a run. I remember putting my head down, which is a big no-no, and then... lights out... I woke up sometime in the ambulance on my way to the hospital with my father asking me if I was OK.

"Of course I said 'Yeah, why?' The hospital released me, I was driven back to the game, and went in for one play in the third quarter on offense, only to realize I had no idea where I was or what I was doing. It's great to see that at all levels of football and other sports are taking the appropriate precautions and medical evaluations for all injuries."

Another game he recalls was a game at Riverside in which he caught the winning touchdown pass in a 13-8 victory. He still has a photo of the celebration after that touchdown.

The Eagles went 6-3-1 his senior season, winning their first three games before losing to Ashtabula in the fourth. Geneva was a running team, mostly running inside, as Craine's brother Don did when he led the team two years earlier.

After high school Craine in 1975 moved on to Baldwin-Wallace, coached by the late, great Lee Tressel.

"Coach Tressel was a great man and he knew how to run a football program," Craine said. "Every year, including my freshman year, BW had great recruiting classes. I was recruited as a wide receiver, but there were 12 freshman wide receivers that reported for fall camp,"

Craine started the second half of his sophomore year and all of his junior year. During a scrimmage before his senior season, the quarterback threw the ball a little high on a throwback play. When Craine came down he shattered his right wrist. He never got to play at all that year, and as it so happened, the Yellow Jackets won the NCAA championship in their division that year. Not being a part of the team, Craine didn't

receive a championship ring.

Getting a redshirt the previous season, he played the next year (1979) and BW made the playoffs but lost to Ithica College, which wound up as champion that year.

Craine graduated in 1980 with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. In 1988-1989, he went back to Lake Erie College to get his Master's in Business Administration, while working at the Perry Nuclear Power Plant after graduation.

He left Perry to work in CEI's corporate office for a couple of years before leaving to take a job with Lucas Aerospace, where he spent seven years.

"Then 9-11 happened," he said. "I loved security work and my old boss (at CEI, now First Energy) called, so I came back in 2004. I spent one year at Perry then from 2005 to the present I've been security manager at the Beaver Valley Nuclear Power Station in Pennsylvania."

Security at all the nuclear power stations is very intense, he said, though he couldn't go into a lot of detail for obvious reasons.

"There are fences with razor ribbing and cameras," he said. "Everyone is trained like military people since 9-11. Nuclear power plant security is a big task to implement protective strategies. One thing you do not want to do is go near a fence."

Craine, the son of Don and MaryLou Craine, has two brothers, Donnie (already in the ACTC Hall of Fame) and David, along with a sister, Kathy. Don Craine, Sr. succumbed in 1991 to cancer (mesothelioma).

"My father was a charismatic guy who liked to joke and have fun," Craine said. "He always told me to 'keep your nose clean', 'do the right thing' and 'have fun.' Great advice from a great man!"

Craine met his wife, Nancy, in 1978 when her friend and Nancy (both from Kent State University) came to B-W to visit one of his friends.

"So my friend and Nancy's friend stated they were going somewhere for a few minutes and would be right back," Craine said. "Needless to say, Nancy and I were left alone for quite some time, which obviously turned out OK as we dated for the next few years, got engaged in 1980, and then married on February 28, 1981. We have been married for 33 years."

The Craines are the proud parents of three beautiful daughters: Katie, 29; Allison, 26, and Erin, 20.

Katie works for Remedi Pharmacy and lives in Garfield Heights. Allison, who graduated from Cleveland State University, is a teacher at Notre Dame Elementary in Chardon, is married and lives in Auburn Township.

Erin is attending Ohio State University as a junior, majoring in Integrated Language Arts and English education.

The Craine sisters played CYO softball, basketball, volleyball and track in school.

"My wife and I were fortunate to be able to coach all three while they participated in the sports and we are proud to say they have a few trophies of their own," Craine said.

Dan and Nancy enjoy watching the Browns ("even as painful as it can be sometimes," Dan said), and with all of the children out of the house enjoy when the kids come for a nice relaxing weekend.

Among the awards Craine values highly are the George Duplay Award he won in high school and the Golden Globe that Gazette Publications honored him with as the outstanding county player after his senior year of college at the annual Ashtabula County Touchdown Club banquet.

"That was a huge surprise for me," Craine said of Duplay Award. "I remember my parents working the banquet and someone had to go get them so they could see me receive the award."

DeGennaro

From Page 10

stayed out of school a year. Then, when I went back, they moved me back inside. I wasn't big enough to play there. Even at OU nobody lifted weights back then. Things have changed completely."

He gave up football and concentrated on his studies. When he graduated, he saw an ad for a teaching/coaching position at Conneaut. He didn't have a teaching certificate, but that was a solvable problem.

"I had to go back (to college) and take courses," he said. "I loved it. I ended up teaching 35 years."

After one year at Conneaut, he went to Riverside, Calif., where he spent three years, then back to northeastern Ohio to Harbor, then the Painesville Township system. He spent the last 27 years of his educational career

teaching history in the Buckeye system, while coaching football and baseball.

"If a person is going to have any success here, he's going to have to get help along the way," DeGennaro said. "My parents were working people who sacrificed a lot to put three kids through college. It was a done deal. I always had respect for what my parents did and am very grateful for what they did. My older brother Gerald is eight years older than me and Les is seven years older. They taught me a lot about football and also about how to compete. They never let me win because I was a lot younger and they felt sorry for me. They taught me to take the game seriously and to play to win. Play the game right or don't play at all.

"My success has to go back to coach Chiacchiero and the assistant coaches at Ashtabula."

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