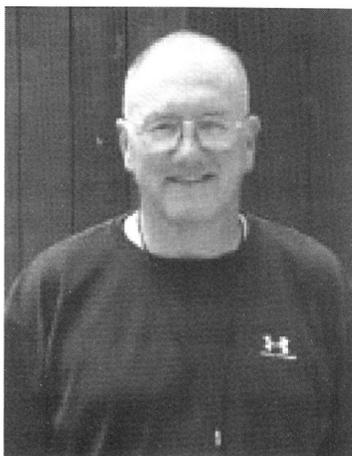


Port Washington Youth Activities

PYA SPORTS HALL OF FAME

JON FITZGERALD



Growing up in Port Washington in the 1960's and 1970's, Jon FitzGerald first became involved with PYA as an 8-year old "midget" football player. Team success came very rapidly to Jon in those early years as that travel football team finished that fall season with the remarkable accomplishment of being undefeated and unscored upon. It would be a foreshadowing of things to come in Jon's athletic career that he played significant roles on championship-caliber teams throughout his youth, high school, and college years. "Fitz" played PYA football up through his 8th grade Pop Warner season, competing in the championship game vs. Massapequa, a team coached by Bob Stuart (PYA HOF '94). From that team, Jon was named a Pop Warner All-Star in 1971, and the Port "Tigers" Pop Warner MVP, too. Jon recalls the pride he felt wearing his PYA football uniform and playing for great coaches which includes his first, Ed Clark (PYA HOF '94), along with Stuart, and Harvey Cohen (PYA HOF '91). To this day, he can clearly remember being escorted by his late father, Bernard, to his very first PYA football practice in 1963 by the fireman's ladder, as well as his very last practice on a cold November morning in 1971.

The core of Jon's teammates from those squads played football together through all of the age levels of PYA football and concluded their senior year (1974) at Schreiber with an undefeated record and a conference championship. After his third varsity football season, he was named All-Nassau County as a lineman, and was the football Vikings team MVP (Leo Costello award winner) as well. He considers that to be his greatest athletic achievement due to the respect that he received from his childhood teammates in winning that award.

In addition to football, Jon also played PYA basketball for 4 years (1968-1971), and was initially introduced to PYA lacrosse by Harvey Cohen, the sport on which he eventually focused. A 2-year varsity starter at Schreiber, he earned All-North Shore honors as a senior defenseman in leading Port to its first ever post-season berth. He also won the Coach's Award in 1975.

After high school, Jon continued to play a key role on successful teams as he first attended Nassau Community College and was a member of their lacrosse team that reached the junior college national championship game. He then transferred to the State University (NY) College at Cortland, where he played 3 more years, attained lacrosse All-American status, appeared in two NCAA national championship games, and represented the North in the prestigious North/South All-Star game in 1980. He also played post-collegiate club lacrosse in the Central Atlantic Lacrosse League, and was an all-star in the mid-1980's.

While attending Nassau, Jon coached football and lacrosse for PYA. After graduating from Cortland, he moved down to northern Virginia for a teaching job with Fairfax County Public Schools later that year. At that point, he began to coach youth lacrosse in the Fairfax area as a volunteer for the Braddock Road Youth Club (BRYC) from 1981-1987. During that stint, the team had a 42 game winning streak which spanned three seasons.

In 1988, he started the boys lacrosse program at W.T. Woodson High School in Fairfax, and remains head coach to this day. His Woodson teams have not lost a regular season conference game since 1994, and more impressively, have won more than 200 games in the 17 years he has coached (more than any other high school coach in the history of the state). Jon looks back with tremendous pride on the program he built, the players he influenced, and the 10 conference championships, 3 Virginia state titles, and 5 Virginia state coach-of-the-year awards he has won. The Woodson team was once again a northern region finalist this past season. Not surprisingly, he is presently regarded as among the elite coaches in the northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

Presently Jon continues to be a highly successful exemplary special education teacher at W.T. Woodson, having been with the public school system for the past 24 years. As he reflects upon the influence and life lessons of all those years playing sports for PYA with all of its fond memories, he feels that is largely responsible for his achievements with all of those Virginia kids down south. Jon still returns to Port to visit his mother, Claire, at her home in Eastern Crest, and to enjoy what he still considers to be the world's greatest town.