

Inaugural class inducted to Ballston Spa Athletics Hall of Fame

Saturday, May 4, 2013 - Saratogian - By DAVID M. JOHNSON

<http://www.saratogian.com/articles/2013/05/04/sports/doc5185cbbd35d17745239665.txt>



The inductees of the 2013 Ballston Spa Athletics Hall of Fame stand for a group shot before the ceremony Saturday afternoon. Photo Eric Jenks

BALLSTON SPA — Laughs, tears and plenty of old stories filled the auditorium as an inaugural class of nine individuals and two teams were inducted to the Ballston Spa Athletics Hall of Fame Saturday.

The diverse group included league, section and state champions, but also Olympians and a former member of the New England Patriots.

“(It’s) exciting to hear about all the accomplishments from (a) time back that kids wouldn’t remember,” said hall of fame committee member Sylvia Bertrand. “We have so many good athletes at Ballston Spa. It’s nice to finally recognize them.”

Of the nine individual inductees, the name William R. Scott came up in nearly all the acceptance speeches. Remembered as the inspiration behind the school’s nickname, “The Scotties”, Scott either coached or was the athletic director for the other eight individual hall of famers’ high school careers including former football coach Richard L. Thomas, Liverpool swim coach James Funciello, former wrestling coach Vincent Johnson, three-sport stars John Caputo, Pasquale Monaco and Allan Durkovic and sibling Olympic speedskaters Richard and John Wurster. Ballston Spa’s 1963-64 boys varsity basketball team and the 2011-12 Ballston Spa/Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake state champion girls alpine ski team were also inducted.

Scott, who died in 2005, was remembered by his great grandson Tyler Guido.

“From living with this incredible man over the last six years of his life, I believe it is not only things that he accomplished but the person that he was that brought him such honor and respect,” Guido said.

Thomas was the next hall of famer to be honored. The 1945 Ballston Spa alum who died in 1997 was a three-sport athlete as a student, then returned to help start the town’s recreation, swimming and wrestling programs and led the school to six Colonial Council football championships.

“Many a night, my brothers and I were stuffed in the back of the station wagon while he dropped everybody off,” Greg Thomas said of his father. “His motto was he wasn’t molding athletes he was molding men.”

Caputo, a class of 1945 alum, was a three-sport athlete who was drafted into the US Army and later played three years of professional baseball. Now retired, Caputo was introduced by his nephew John A. Caputo.

Funciello played baseball football and basketball at Ballston Spa, but went on to become one of the winningest high school swim coaches in the state at Section III Liverpool. The 1954 Ballston Spa alum compiled a 228-5 career record at the school and once had a streak of 109 straight meets without a loss.

"We left this town about 55 years ago but I don't think we really left cause we always felt like we were a part of this town," Funciello said of moving away with his wife Shirley. "That's what makes this even more special. At this stage in my life, you wonder if anyone even remembers your name."

Monaco was part of the 11-man Ballston Spa team that went undefeated en route to a Saratoga County League Championship.

"I hope the kids today end up having the fun that I had playing," said Monaco, who was introduced in an emotional speech by his son Robert Monaco.

Richard Wurster was a three-time national speed skating champion and an Olympian in 1968. The 1960 Scotties alum was not as successful playing football, basketball or baseball growing up though. His recollection of playing high school sports, mostly poorly, was received with laughter throughout the auditorium. His brother John Wurster, however was a different story. A member of the Class of 1966, the younger Wurster was an Olympic speed skater, but also a member of the 1963-64 basketball team that was inducted. John Wurster thanked his father for inspiring him to athletic greatness.

Johnson played football, wrestling and track for Ballston Spa but is best known for his 29 years as varsity wrestling coach.

"I'd like to thank all those who came into the gym as freshman and left as men," Johnson said. "As much as they were taught, they taught me."

Durkovic starred in baseball, basketball and football for the Scotties then went on to accept a scholarship to play football at Boston University. He was signed by the New England Patriots to play tight end and punt but spent his lone year on the injured reserve. "My selection came as a complete surprise," the 1968 alum said. "It's an honor to be part of the inaugural class."

Living members of the '63-64 boys basketball team that repeated as Class B sectional champs and became the first 'B' school to win the A-B final are Robert Denis, Jack Denis, Robert Barney, John Diggins, James Capasso, John T. Rich, Laurence Osterwise, John Randall, William Arnold, Keith Hall, David Bryant, Robert Farstad, James Repice and John Wurster. Wayne Peterson and coach Floyd Jones received the award posthumously.

The four members of the state champion Ballston Spa/Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake alpine ski team were the only females to be inducted in the inaugural class. Clarkson student Taylor Manderson praised her teammates for putting the team title ahead of their personal accomplishments en route to state titles in 2011 and 2012. Scotties senior Demi Feder is was the only current student among the inductees. Morgan Feder missed the ceremony due to final exams at RIT but Castleton State College freshman Rebecca Stodgell was on hand for the ceremony.