

# Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation

Awards Banquet and  
Hall of Fame Induction

**Sunday, April 2nd, 2017**

**OFFICIAL  
PROGRAM**

## 2017 ACBF Hall Of Fame INDUCTEES

CARLOS APONTE  
(1985 - Ashtabula)

DENNY SABO  
(1975 - Conneaut)

ROB FERL  
(1972 - Conneaut)

STEVE CARLSON  
(1986 - Edgewood)

NARA (DEJESUS) SKIPPER  
(1999 - Geneva)

RHEA (DEJESUS) GREENE  
(2002 - Geneva)

BRIAN TURNER  
(1989 - Grand Valley)

PAUL ERICKSON  
(1964 - Harbor)

KEN "MOOSE" TAFT  
(1963 - Jefferson)

SHELLY BURNS  
(1995 - Jefferson)

ALAN MILLER  
(1980 - Pymatuning Valley)

RON WEAVER  
(Contributor)

# Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation

2017 Awards Dinner  
Sunday April 2, 2017  
Conneaut Human Resources Center

## Program

National Anthem	The Late, Great Karl Pearson
Invocation	Deacon Richard Johnson
Welcoming Remarks	Brad Ellis, Foundation President
Banquet Dinner	Phil's Catering
Introduction of All-County First Teams	Steve Kray
Introduction of Coaches and Foundation Nominees	Andy Juhola
ACBF HOF Inductees	Dave Miller

## Presentation of Awards

Edward Jones/David Flautt Scholarship	David Flautt
ACBF Coaches'/Referees' Award	Al Goodwin
ACBF Alumni Achievement Award	Dawn Zappitelli
ACBF Officials' Appreciation Award	Phil Garcia
ACBF Coach of the Year (Girls)	Melody Nowakowski
ACBF Coach of the Year (Boys)	John Higgins
ACBF Player of the Year (Girls)	Doug Hladek
ACBF Player of the Year (Boys)	Bob Hitchcock
Closing Remarks	Brad Ellis

## Trustees

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Nicholas Iarocci

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Andy Juhola	Director
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## Ashtabula County Coaches

School	Girls	Boys
Edgewood	Paul Stofan	John Bowler
Conneaut	Tony Pasanen	Tim Tallbacka
Geneva	Nancy Barbo	Shane Clugh
Lakeside	William Isco	Rob Pisano
Grand Valley	Kim Triskett	Justin Turk
Jefferson	Steve Locy	Steve French
Pymatuning Valley	Jeff Compan	Ryan Shontz
St. John	Nick Iarocci	Curtis Turner

# ABC F HOF Class of 2017

Carlos Aponte  
Steve Carlson  
Shelly Burns  
Rob Ferl

Page 4  
Page 5  
Page 6  
Page 7

Rhea (DeJesus) Greene  
Nara (DeJesus) Skipper  
Brian Turner  
Alan Miller

Page 8  
Page 9  
Page 10  
Page 11

Denny Sabo  
Paul Erickson  
Ron Weaver  
Ken Taft

Page 13  
Page 14  
Page 15  
Page 16

# ABC F HOF Inductees

### Class of 2016

Pete Candela  
Dan Coxon  
Kay Ann Fails  
Kenneth Green  
Boyd Griffith  
Sam Hands  
Terrence Hanna  
Jemal Harris  
Kelly Kapferer  
Lori Korver  
Brad McNeilly  
Lou Pavolino  
Al Runyan

### Class of 2015

Dan Craft  
Kelly Easton Zirzow  
Krystal Henson Force  
Doug Hitchcock  
Jennifer  
Johnston Horner  
John Kampf  
Bill Kaydo  
Kiki McNair

Bob Naylor  
Dana Schulte  
Ron Silvius  
Bob Spencer  
Dave Tirabasso  
**Class of 2014**  
Jim Adams  
Mike Blauman  
Tim Bowler  
Nadine Cox  
Jonathan Freeman  
Sean Freeman  
Heidi French  
Phil Garcia  
Dave Golen  
Ray Harriman  
Clyde Koski  
Eddie Kropf  
Laura Silvius  
Jim Welty, Jr.  
Jim Welty, Sr.  
**Class of 2013**  
Jim Gilbert  
Steve Hanek

Jim Henson  
John Higgins  
Richard "Dick" Hill  
Kelly Hitchcock  
Tiffany Leonard  
Carl McIlwain  
Marianne Meola  
10. Angela Miller  
Tom Naylor  
Hiram Safford  
Al "Red" Schubert  
Carl Stokes  
Micky Zigmund  
**Class of 2012**  
Lori Belconis  
Jim Chiacchiero  
Dutch Cotton  
Brad Ellis  
Jon Hall  
Gordon Hitchcock  
Eugene Miller  
Steve Oman  
Lyle Pepin  
Jeff Puffer

Jerry Puffer  
Dave Sillanpaa  
Charles Watson  
**Class of 2011**  
Bill Brosky  
Jeff Cicon  
Larry Cumpston  
Chris Hammon  
Kim Hitchcock  
Jim Landis  
Deora Marsh  
Leo Mucci  
Joe Rich  
Tim Richards  
Norm Urcheck  
**Class of 2010**  
David Benton  
Russell Bethel  
Donna Gregg  
Heidi Litwiler  
Maurice McDonald  
Phil Miller  
Jim Osborne  
Ernie Pasqualone

Fred Scruggs  
John Wheelock  
**Class of 2009**  
Jim Bradley  
Bill Brainard  
Kelly Henson  
Scott Humphrey  
Billy Johnson  
Kelly Johnson  
Randy Knowles  
Larry Lattimer  
Bruno Mallone  
Bob Miller  
Karl Pearson  
Tom Ritari  
Ken Smith  
Marthella  
Spinneweber  
**Class of 2008**  
Ed Armstrong  
Denny Berrier  
Don Cannell  
Tammy Church  
Hagstrom

Al Goodwin  
Adam Holman  
E.J. Kinleyside  
Gary Kreilach  
Chris Larick  
Steve McHugh  
Ron Richards  
Joe Shantz  
Chuck Stevens  
Kim Triskett  
Trixie Wolf  
**Class of 2007**  
Dale Arkenburg  
Jim Dolan  
Bob Fenton  
Paul Freeman  
Tom Henson  
Tom Hill  
Fred Hirsimaki  
Jim Hood  
Traci Hozian  
Don Marsh  
Robert Puffer  
Pat Sheldon

**Class of 2006**  
Di Anthony  
Kelly Boggs  
Jim Cordell  
Dan Foster  
Ronnie Hanson  
Harvey Hunt  
Jay McHugh  
Ray Peet  
Tonya Tallbacka  
Eleanor Young  
**Class of 2005**  
Tammy Busser  
Roberta Cevera  
John Coleman  
Shellie Crandall  
Harry Fails  
Chris Fitting  
Henry Garvey  
Charles Hirshey  
Melody Holt  
Randy Linsted  
Richard Scribden  
Frank Zeman

**Class of 2004**  
Ange Candela  
Jim Dodd  
Andrew Isco  
Andy Juhola  
Anita Jurcenko  
Chuck Naso  
Sue Pokelsek  
Frank Roskovics  
Anita Tersigni  
Bob Walters  
Matt Zappitelli  
**Class of 2003**  
Al Bailey  
Bob Ball  
Ed Batanian  
Flo Carey  
Diane Davis  
Andy Garcia  
Gene Gephart  
Jon Hall, Sr.  
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Bob Hitchcock  
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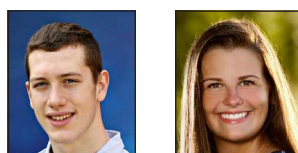
# ACBF Player of the Year Nominees

### Conneaut



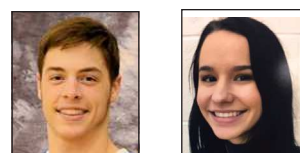
E. Heinonen T. Taylor

### Edgewood



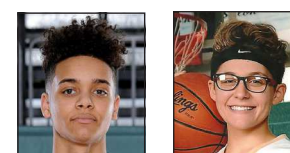
M. Ernst K. Sloan

### GV



C. Osburn C. Gallo

### Lakeside



I. Mathers C. Aponte

### PV



M. Hurst M. Babic

### St. John



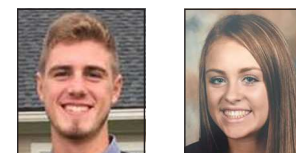
T. Massucci M. Paradie

### Geneva



N. Stoltz H. Peoples

### Jefferson



S. Hitchcock H. Root

# Persistence pays off for Ashtabula grad Aponte

BY CHRIS LARICK

sports@starbeacon.com

Determined to play college basketball but hindered by his family's financial situation, Carlos Aponte wasn't about to leave his fate in the hands of other people.

So Aponte took action.

He went to the guidance office at Ashtabula High School and laboriously copied down information about college coaches from 3-by-5 filing cards.

Using the information, Aponte made personal contact with the coaches.

"That got me a few phone calls," he said. "It was a long process. There weren't a lot of offers. But by the end of the year, two colleges showed an interest. Bob Huggins, who coached Walsh at the time, said he'd visit, but wanted to wait until the basketball season was over.

"Meanwhile, the coach at Dyke College, Michael Friedman, in Cleveland called and came down for one of my tournament games. I had 36 points and 15 or so rebounds, the best game I ever had. He called me that week and offered me a scholarship."

Waiting for Walsh's offer, Aponte, the son of Emilia and Domingo Aponte, didn't accept immediately. But when all the school could come up with was a half-scholarship, his course was decided. Aponte would be a Dyke Demon.

Aponte had enjoyed a



PHOTO SUBMITTED

**Carlos Aponte (second from right) is shown with (from left) Lakeside athletic Director Mike Cochran, daughter, Carly and wife, Kimberly, during a Dragons girls basketball game in the 2016-17 season. Carlos Aponte played basketball at Dyke College.**

fine career for Ashtabula's Panthers, then under the tutelage of Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame player and coach Bob Walters.

"He was very astute in the fundamentals of the game," Aponte said. "For me personally, learning the fundamentals of how to shoot, dribble, set picks and play defense — all those things — were the basis of my going forward in the sport."

At the time there was no shortage of basketball talent at Ashtabula High School, and Aponte, a 1985

graduate, had to wait his turn.

By his junior year, though, he was starting alongside Terence Hanna, Louis Taylor and Terry Thompson.

That group took the Panthers to the brink of the Northeastern Conference championship that year.

Only a loss to Madison in the last game of the season prevented a title.

"We had mixed success my senior year," Aponte said. "Edgewood and Geneva beat us out. Those two teams lost only to each other and Ashtabula.

We beat a lot of teams, but couldn't sustain it. We had lost a little size from the last year. We played as hard as we could and made a run at it."

Aponte and his siblings had been encouraged to take part in athletics from a very young age.

"My mother was all about ball sports," he said. "She got me and my sister and brother involved. (Youth) basketball was not as well organized as it is today. I remember losing at basketball when I first started in elementary school. In sixth grade I'd run and run,

shooting and passing the basketball. When I got to junior high I wanted to try out for the basketball team. I used to go down to the West Street courts. The kids were all bigger. The littler kids (like me) couldn't play 'til the sun went down.

"In the seventh and eighth grades I tried to play against the high school kids. Playing with older kids helps you learn the game a little better."

Aponte also played mid-level league and football with his mother's encouragement.

"She was the greatest spectator in Ashtabula County," Aponte laughs. "Me and my brother (Jason) and sister (Maria) all did ball sports.

When he was a freshman, Aponte broke his foot playing football and didn't play that game anymore.

He continued playing basketball and baseball, however, through high school.

In baseball, Aponte played first base and was voted all-county his senior year, batting over .400.

He later tried out for the Cincinnati Reds when they recruited in Ashtabula County and made the first cut. But Aponte didn't get a contract.

"My baseball dreams ended right there," he said.

In basketball, he deferred to Hanna as a junior, averaging about 12 points and 10 rebounds and making second-team all-county and all-conference.

# Carlson has fond memories of Edgewood

BY CHRIS LARICK

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Deafening silence.

That's one of the great memories Steve Carlson has of his basketball days at Edgewood High School.

Carlson, who graduated in 1986, remembers the great crowds that saw basketball games in the Warrior gymnasium.

"I remember several times the crowd was so loud that you could hear a pin drop, it was so deafening" he said. "That was a highlight for me. I just loved that place. I have a lot of good memories of the people at Edgewood."

Carlson, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on Sunday, played alongside teammates Ryan Chandler, Fred Galle, Gary Goode, Kurt Kalinowski, J.T. Kanicki, Todd Hjerpe, Gerald McMahon and Aaron Emery, his cousin at times during his high-school career.

"I think we did well," Carlson said. "I remember our senior year we played Riverside at home for a



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Edgewood graduate Steve Carlson works as the registrar at Grace College in northern Indiana. Carlson enjoyed his time playing basketball for the Warriors.**

chance to share the (NEC) championship. I feel we had pretty good teams during my sophomore and junior

years. Fred was our big guy in the middle. Ryan was a very good ballhandler and playmaker. We focused on

defense."

Al Goodwin was the Warriors head coach at the time.

"He was tremendous," Carlson said. "I loved playing for the man. He was a no-nonsense kind of guy. We'd come in, get our work done, work hard and get out of the gym. He made you understand your role. He loved his players and we all believed in the system, defense first. It was a good experience."

A forward, Carlson was usually assigned to play in the low post, though occasionally he moved out to the wing.

"On defense I played all over in the 3-2 zone, sometimes the top, sometimes the wing, and in the trenches too," he said. "I was pretty versatile."

In 1986 was the final year before the 3-point shot became legal in Ohio high schools, so there was no real incentive to shoot from outside.

"We ran a pretty simple kind of offense," Carlson said. "It was the kind of offense that was predicated on getting a high-percentage

shot. We'd pound it in low most of the time."

Carlson, who was 6-foot-5, 155 at the time ("all skin and bone," as he puts it), remembers once being assigned to defend Geneva's Richie DeJesus, a quick guard.

That season, Carlson and DeJesus were Co-Players of the Year in the NEC.

In addition to basketball, Carlson was the top player on the Warriors' golf team.

"My freshman year we weren't that good," he said. "We just hadn't played enough. By my senior year we just missed going to state as a team. I was the number one golfer and the number two was often shared between my cousin, Aaron Emory, and Ernie Niemi. Tim Essig, who coached JV basketball for Al (Goodwin) was the golf coach. When Aaron and Ernie became seniors, Edgewood did go to state."

After graduating from Edgewood, Carlson moved to Grove City College (Pa.) and played basketball under John Barr, who was rumored to have played basketball

SEE **CARLSON**, 12



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# Burns won a national championship at Walsh

BY CHRIS LARICK

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Not much was expected when the Walsh Cavaliers made it to the Women's NAIA National Championship Tournament in 1997 under coach Karl Smesko.

The Cavaliers hadn't even won their conference tournament. They scraped into the field as the final at-large selection. And they didn't have a starting player who stood taller than 5-foot-9.

"Our starting team was all guards," said Shelly Burns, the shooting guard on that squad. "Since we were the lowest-ranked team, we had to play everybody."

The Cavaliers played everybody — beat everybody to become national champions.

"That was the most exciting thing ever," Burns said.

Burns, a former Jefferson standout and 1995 graduate, will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on Sunday.

She first started playing basketball in the fifth grade during physical education class, stealing the ball every time another schoolmate would try to bring it up.

"The teacher, Jeannette Bartlett, would say, 'Don't go after the ball 'til they are inside of the 3-point line, so they have a chance to dribble it up the floor,'" Burns said.

Bartlett spoke to Burns' parents about putting her into camps because she picked up the sport quickly.

"Immediately, I decided I wanted to take the game up," Burns said.

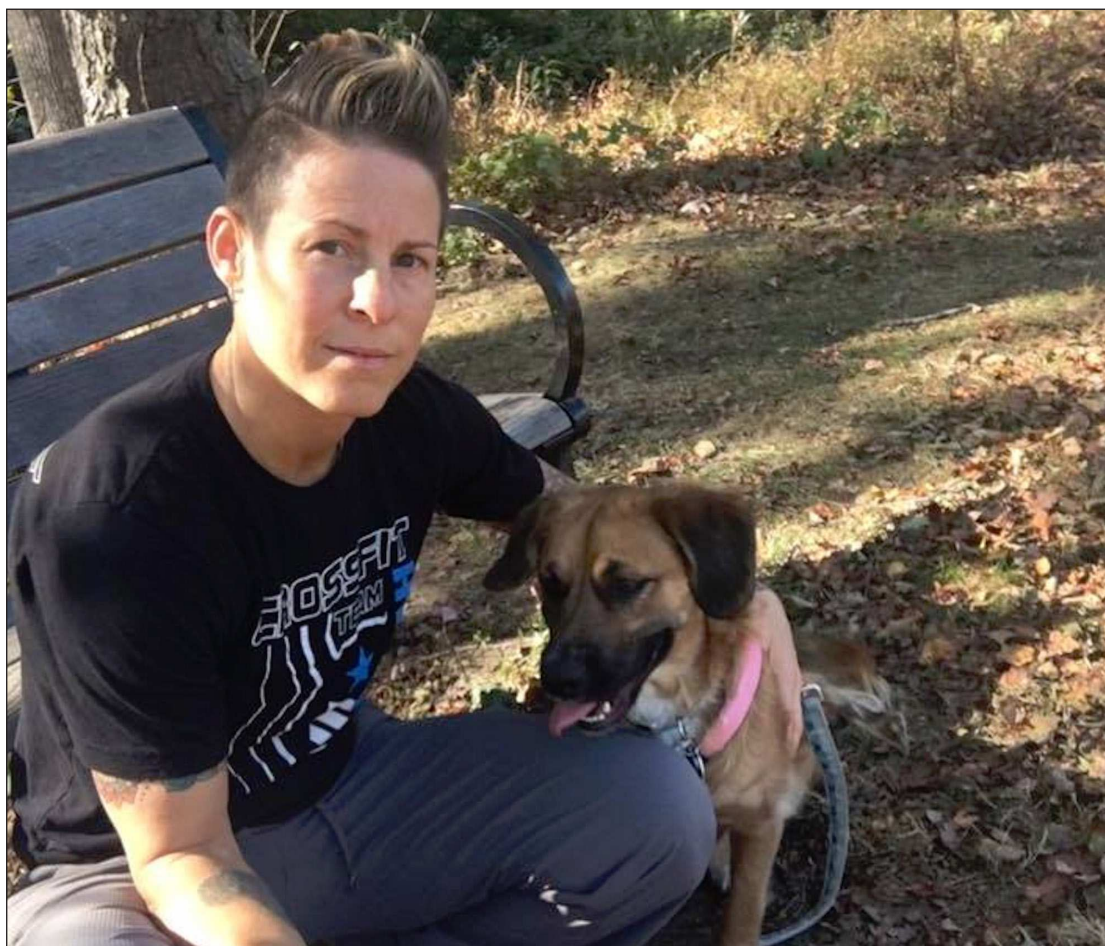


PHOTO SUBMITTED

**Jefferson graduate Shelly Burns, who won a NAIA women's basketball championship at Walsh in 1997, owns a chiropractic clinic in Hendersonville, N.C. She has obtained a franchise in her own CrossFit gym, CrossFit HLV also in Hendersonville.**

She played on one of Rod Holmes' early teams, though not his first.

"He definitely built (your skills) in areas you were not quite comfortable in," Burns said. "He made you a better player. He was always willing to open the gym for us."

Burns was the best player on the Falcon squads in her time, but she received help from players like Jody Springer, Candy Williams, Ryan Rebel and Kiki McNair, in her second year.

"I played point guard," Burns said. "I liked to drive and pull up for an outside shot or drive the middle and dish it. I always liked to shoot 3-pointers."

Like most athletes at Jefferson, Burns took part in more than one sport.

"I was always very athletic," she said. "I played volleyball when I was a freshman and sophomore, then ran cross country and track, the high jump, long jump and a lot of relays — wherever I could get

a lot of points. But I ran cross country and track to make me better in basketball."

A three-year letter winner at Jefferson, Burns totaled 342 steals, 331 assists and 921 points (360 field goals made).

Through 67 games, she averaged 13.6 points per contest.

An outstanding foul shooter, Burns converted 78 percent in her career, including a best 86 percent one season and once connected on 20

straight free throws.

In her junior and senior seasons (1993-1994 and 1994-1995), Burns was named Star Beacon All-Ashtabula County Player of the Year.

She was also Northeastern Conference Player of the Year as a senior. In state voting, Burns was honorable mention her junior year and special mention as a senior.

"It came easily to me, but I put a lot of work into it, too," Burns said.

After graduation, she was heavily recruited by Mount Union and Walsh.

"I visited Walsh and as soon as I walked on to the court with the girls, I felt an instant connection," Burns said. "Walsh was an NAIA school, too so they could give you a scholarship for half the tuition. Division III schools (like Mount Union) don't pay. It was not too far from home, either."

Burns began at Walsh as a point guard, but was switched to shooting guard as a sophomore.

"The shooting guard got hurt," she said. "I had a really good ability to read screens and pull up to shoot threes, so I did that the rest of my career."

Burns, the oldest of Don and Debi Burns' three children, enjoyed quite a career at Walsh.

Running the point as a freshman, she played in 30 games and averaged 4.8 points per outing, including 17 off the bench in a playoff loss to Shawnee State.

SEE **BURNS**, 17

# Basketball a haven for Ferl during turbulent times

BY CHRIS LARICK

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During the turbulent times of the early 1970s, Rob Ferl and other athletes of his age often found a safe haven in sports. In Ferl's case, that often meant basketball.

"At that time it was toward the end of the Vietnam War," Ferl said. "There was Civil Rights unrest and the Kent State shootings.

"There was kind of an unrest in the universe. We dealt with that a lot within the context of basketball. I remember during the time of the moon landings, our coaches — Harry Fails, Paul Freeman and Tom Ritari — were taking us everywhere to play basketball. We would just go. Some of us kids in Conneaut were tucked away from the unrest by the fun context of sports and basketball. During many of the big events in the '60s and '70s we were tied up in basketball."

Those thoughts, of course, are in retrospect. Ferl and his teammates were too busy playing the game to spend a lot of time philosophizing about current events at the time.

Ferl, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County

Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on Sunday, spent a lot of time with one of those teammates.

"Tim Richards (who is already a member of the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame) and I go way back to when we were 11 and 12 years old," Ferl said. "We played on opposing baseball teams. We spent a lot of time playing against and then eventually alongside each other."

The best basketball team Ferl and Richards played on was in the 1970 season as sophomores.

"We went to Canton and pretty far in the tournament," Ferl said. "Scott Humphrey, Al Razem, Jeff Puffer and John Colson were on that team. We had a some talented guys and were scoring a lot of points. We got far that year because we would press the ball. I remember as a sophomore (the Spartans) scoring 100 points in a game, back before the three-point line. At times we'd score a lot."

At that time, Conneaut was coached by Fails, with Freeman and Ritari as assistants. All three are in the ACBF Hall of Fame.

"Those guys were great coaches," Ferl said. "They



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Rob Ferl is pictured with his wife, Mary-Blythe, at the Cleveland Marathon. Ferl and Conneaut teammates were busy playing basketball during turbulent current times in the early 1970s.**

would teach kids. When we were coming up in the eighth and ninth grades, Tom Ritari was important in that. Harry Fails and Paul Freeman were superstars in county (coaching) history.

Ferl's years in high school

were banner times for the county and the Northeastern Conference. Among the opponents Ferl recalls were Eugene Miller of Ashtabula and Ernie Pasqualone of Geneva.

"At the time the NEC was

a huge league," Ferl said. "In 1969, 1970, 1971 and 1972, it was a strong league. We were in the Star Beacon all the time."

Ferl, 6-foot-5 at the time, played strong forward and averaged about 19 or 20 points per game game his final two years, earning all-county and All-NEC honors.

"I finished somewhere in the top 25 all-time in the NEC," he said.

In addition to basketball, Ferl played safety and end in football and outfield in baseball.

"To play three sports back in the day was not uncommon," he said. "Sports were so important to us growing up.

"We all learned a lot about life and success through sports, especially basketball. We played all seasons. We'd all go up to the basketball courts in the summer. Our metaphors for life came out of basketball and sports. You don't see that at the time, but increasingly as you look back. What you learn about leadership and success comes from your coaches and people on successful teams that made it happen."

SEE FERL, 17



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# Family, sports has played a role in Greene's life

BY CHRIS LARICK

sports@starbeacon.com

Geneva High School's Sister Act only performed on a big stage for one season.

But Nara and Rhea DeJesus had perfected their roles over many years, playing in their driveway with and against their dad, Louis; brother, Kyle and many neighborhood kids, including boys.

With a three-year difference in ages, they only played together competitively in the 1998-1999 season, when Nara, a forward, was a senior and Rhea, a point guard, a freshman.

To expedite their families traveling from their homes in North Carolina, the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation decided to induct the sisters into the group's Hall of Fame together.

They will join that illustrious group on Sunday during the annual banquet at Conneaut Human Resources Center.

"All of us played basketball as a family as we grew up in the neighborhood," Rhea Greene said.

Nara had played for three years at Geneva when Rhea joined her on the varsity team.

Eventually, Rhea played with girls in or nearer her class, but for that freshman year, others on the team included Stephanie Clarkson, Kristen Clunk, Lindsey Stepp and Marlena Fox.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Rhea DeJesus Greene is pictured with her husband, Jonathan, daughter, Lulu and son, Max. Family has been played an integral role in Rhea DeJesus Greene's athletic success at Geneva High School.

Later, players like Jordan Cuddy, Heidi Dragon, Beth DeGroot, Shelly and Melissa Vandervort and Alicia Sturkie, joined her.

Nancy Barbo had taken over the reigns of the team after Bob Herpy's untimely death in 1995.

"She was the most impactful coach I had in my athletic career," Greene said. "We keep in touch to this day. I respect her because she is a master at creating a team — no matter the individual talent. She preaches hard work, effort, and defense which always motivated me and resonates with me to this day. On top of that, she truly cares about her players. Most coaches have an iron fist or are too soft. Coach Barbo is a very good balance of the two. I never ever questioned how much she cared for as as a person or a team.

I think that goes a long way, that a person who asks so much of you cares about you so much."

As Greene recalls, the Eagles won Northeastern Conference championships her junior and senior years.

Though serving as point guard, she accrued 1,507 points in high school, fifth on the county scoring list as late as 2008.

"It's a time I'll never forget," Greene said of her year playing with her sister. "It was very special to share that with her. It was nice that we didn't play the same position so there was no competitiveness there, no jealousy, just 100 percent support. We had grown up playing with each other. She was always someone I looked up to. That made it more special. I always wanted to be like her and to play like her."

"The only thing better than playing with her is living five minutes from her and having our kids grow up together."

Greene ran track at Geneva for three years, before concentrating on her other sports.

She was an excellent volleyball player, playing the setter position.

Coached by Stan Beilech at the time, the Eagles did very well.

Greene, with most of her basketball teammates like Cuddy, Vandervort sisters, Sturkie, Clunk and Stepp, including Christina Vincent and Kaysha Coy, led the way.

As graduation for Greene approached, she weighed her options for a college scholarship — either basketball or volleyball.

"I could probably have played basketball," she said. "My junior year I made the

decision to pursue volleyball, so I didn't look too much for basketball (opportunities). I don't want to say I was burned out (on basketball), but maybe at that point in my life I knew I wanted to focus on something different, a new challenge. A lot of athletes quit their sports in college. The turnover rate is pretty high. Volleyball is the sport I wanted to sink my teeth into in college."

Since Greene focused on setting in high school, that's what she pursued in college.

"There are usually only one or two setters per team," she said. "It's like playing point guard or quarterback. The key for me was finding a school I wanted to pursue academically but also one that I could contribute to on the court."

Greene also wanted to get away from the cold weather. Her uncle, Williem had moved to Charlotte years before so she was interested in colleges in that area.

She found one — Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina about an hour and 15 minutes from Charlotte.

Greene played all four years, starting from her sophomore year on.

Not really sure what she wanted to do after college, Greene studied international studies, desiring to travel abroad. In her junior year, spent a semester studying in Spain.

Wanting to stay in the North Carolina, Greene took

SEE GREENE, 17



# Skipper started on the court at a young age

BY CHRIS LARICK

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No one knew quite what to expect when Geneva girls basketball coach Bob Herpy (better known as Eagles football coach) died suddenly in 1995, putting a young Nancy Barbo into the spotlight as Geneva's new girls basketball coach.

"They had different styles," said Nara (DeJesus) Skipper, a 1999 Geneva graduate who will, along with her sister Rhea, be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on Sunday. "(Barbo) was still a younger coach learning her style. She evolved into one of the best coaches once she became head varsity coach."

The Eagles weren't the dominant team they were to become at that time, but they had Skipper and other good players, like Stephanie Clarkson, Kristen Clunk, Lindsay Step and Marlena Fox the court that didn't hurt Barbo's development.

"She did more conditioning," Skipper said of Barbo. "I remember doing a lot



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Nara DeJesus Skipper started her basketball career at Geneva, then played collegiately at Wooster. After leaving the teaching business to raise a family, she had started working with her father and brother in a custom packaging company called CompanyBox.**

more drills, especially conditioning types of drills. At times she wanted us to slow

down, but we had a pretty quick team, quick from one end of the court to the other.

We didn't play many zones, used a lot of man-to-man with a lot of pressing. That's where the conditioning came in."

Skipper had learned the game of basketball early, playing with Rhea, her father, Louis and his friends, like Ernie Pasqualone and Al Landphair, and neighborhood kids like Brian, Kevin and Eric Buckman on the family's driveway.

"We'd also go on Sundays to the old Geneva High School," Skipper said. "It became kind of a ritual to go on Sundays. The men would play on one court and the kids on another. There were some younger kids. We were the oldest girls. There weren't a lot of girls. We played a lot of three-on-three tournaments in the summer."

The DeJesus girls also played in the Geneva Recreation League.

Their plays reached Herpy's ears.

"He was the first one to see the talent in me," Skipper said. "He had a very big impact on my career in

general. He pulled me off the freshman team. He was so nurturing and such a good coach he made me feel comfortable, explained (my promotion) to the seniors do there wasn't any animosity among my teammates."

Fairly tall at 5-foot-10, Skipper played forward.

"We did well," she said. "Not as well as they did after I left. (Barbo) was perfecting her coaching style. The first years were good but not compared with what she's done with the team since. It takes time to build a program. You want to have the program to a point where the girls want to play because the team is winning. It took a while to build that foundation. The seniors set the tone for when the eighth graders come in."

The Madison and Jefferson had good girls basketball teams at the time and became Geneva's main rivals.

"Playing basketball with my little sister was some of the most fun I've had in my basketball career," Skipper

SEE SKIPPER, 18



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# Turner shined in three sports at GV

BY CHRIS LARICK

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Baseball players like Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera and Andy Pettitte became household-name multi-millionaires.

New York Yankee farm-club teammates like Brian Turner rode old buses across the countryside, made perhaps \$1,500 a month and ate soup for lunch.

The path to a professional baseball career wasn't always obvious for Turner, a three-sport standout at Grand Valley.

Turner, a 1989 graduate will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame at the Conneaut Human Resources Center on Sunday.

He was the Mustangs' quarterback in football, a shooting guard in basketball and a hard-hitting outfielder in baseball.

In football, Turner didn't get to play much as a freshman, a season in Grand Valley made the playoffs for the first time before being beaten by a Hawken team led by future NFL wide receiver O.J. McDuffie.

During Turner's years with the Mustangs, he was coached by Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Famer Jim Henson and played with stand-outs like his brother, Dale, Jimmy Henson, Jeff Takacs, Brian Snowberger and Tom Boiarski, in addition to classmates Chad Fernandez and Kevin White.



PHOTO SUBMITTED

**Grand Valley graduate Brian Turner (right) is pictured with (from left) —his wife, Christy, son, Michael, and daughter, Megan. Turner played three sports for the Mustangs, but was drafted by the New York Yankees.**

"My class had a real good year, going 8-2 and losing only to Canton Central Catholic and Steubenville Central Catholic," Turner said. "I got hurt my senior year and played only four games. I still feel that a little today in my right shoulder."

In basketball, Turner, the son of Perry and Virginia Turner, was coached by Tom Henson, Jim's brother, and a future Ashtabula County Touchdown Club and ACBF Hall of Famer.

Teammates included Steve Oman, Bobby Winfield, Dominic DeLucca, Carl McElroy and David Christ. When Turner was a senior, the Mustangs made it to the district finals, before falling

to Warren JFK at Warren Western Reserve.

"We jumped out to a 12-2 lead, but they chipped away," Turner said. "I thought we were the better team."

As a senior, Turner averaged about 20 points and nine rebounds per game.

His best sport, however, was baseball.

He was named Ashtabula County Player of the Year as a junior and senior, batting around .450 to .480.

Turner may have been able to play basketball in college at the Division III or possibly Division II level.

But his height (6-foot-2) pretty much ruled out playing shooting guard at the Division I level.

He did, however, receive a scholarship offer from Ohio State, making that discussion moot.

And, when the New York Yankees drafted him in the baseball draft, Turner jumped at the chance.

"I regret (not going to college) somewhat, for the education," he said. "But I got to play with all those great teammates and other great players who were bitter rivals. It was an awesome experience."

Turner was on Yankee farm teams with Jeter, Rivera and Pettitte. He even roomed with Pettitte for a year.

But minor league baseball was no dream job.

He was always on the

move, starting with rookie ball in Sarasota, Fla. in 1990.

From there it was on to Greensboro, North Carolina; Oneta, New York; Fort Lauderdale, Florida; San Bernardino, California; Albany, New York; Tampa, Florida and Norwich, Connecticut.

"The money was terrible," Turner said. "I lived with four guys, trying to ball bills. But the dream (of making the Major Leagues) is what it's all about."

The "perks" of playing in the minor leagues could be nightmarish, however.

"I got drafted at \$850 a month," Turner said. "Later, it was \$1,000-\$1,500 a month. They paid for dinner, but it wasn't much. At lunch you ate soup and crackers in Florida, where it was hot. Later we got a per diem (per day) for food, of \$12 to \$15."

Then there were the long, boring bus rides during which players amused themselves playing cards. At times some of them found themselves losing their per diem money while playing.

"We never flew," Turner said. "I think our longest trip was from Portland, Maine, to Akron. (Professional baseball) was not as glamorous as it seems."

Turner met his wife, Christy, while playing at Greensboro, North Carolina, in his fourth year.

After seven years in the Yankees' farm system, the last at Norwich, the Yankees cut him.

# Miller overcame injury for HOF career at Hiram

BY CHRIS LARICK

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In the late fall of 1979, Pymatuning boys basketball coach Denny Smith had an eye on the prizes of a Grand River Conference championship and long run in the tournament.

Laker Alan Miller, a 6-foot-8 center, dreamed of a Division I college scholarship.

All of those hopes came crashing down during a preseason press-breaking practice.

"I just came to the middle like I'm supposed to do and they lobbed the ball to me," Miller told then-sports editor Darrell Lowe after the season had ended on May 1, 1980. "I went up in the air and came down. I landed on the side of (my foot) ... heard some ripping and tearing. I went down and within 20 seconds it was huge."

Miller, who had averaged double figures in scoring and rebounding and was a first-team All-GRC and All-Ashtabula County selection as a junior, had surgery the following day but missed his entire whole season.

Anticipated Division I offers never came. Miller took his basketball talents

to Hiram College, where he fashioned a nice career.

Miller, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation's Hall of Fame on Sunday, had only taken up playing basketball in the seventh grade.

"I had no interest in it, but my buddies convinced me to go out," said Miller, the son of Peggy Ernst and Bob Miller. "In the seventh grade I was horrible, only played in two or three games. In the eighth grade, I played every game and scored some points."

The PV coaching staff moved Miller up to JV as a freshman. He was only 6-1 at that time, but shot up to 6-5 as a sophomore and 6-6 1/2 or 6-7 as a junior.

He started as a sophomore, and was "pretty much something to be reckoned with," as he puts it, by Miller's junior season.

"I did well," he said. "I might have made honorable mention (all-league) as a sophomore, and played pretty well as a junior."

The following fall, Miller played in two scrimmages before his accident.

"I was looking forward to my senior season with great anticipation," he said. "Then



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Pymatuning Valley graduate Alan Miller was inducted into the Hiram College Hall of Fame in 2000. He works at Carter Lumber in Burton, Michigan.**

it happened. The highlight of my senior year was climbing hills and going to pep rallies with a cast on my leg."

The downfall was also difficult for PV, who would have teamed Miller with talented and improving junior Maurice McDonald, and sharpshooting senior guard John Lipani.

"John and I spent a lot of time together," Miller said. "We played a lot of basket-

ball together, enjoyed the sport and the competition. We took it to each other. I was going to be the inside force and he had an excellent jump shot. We had big anticipations. Denny Smith might have shed a tear or two (when I got injured)."

By spring sports, Miller was pretty much healed and took part in track.

"My buddies talked me into

that," he said. "I did the high jump and threw the shot put. I had no form, but had a lot of leverage. I whipped (the shot) out there."

Miller got a few college nibbles from schools like Cleveland State and Kent State.

Bobby Huggins, then coaching Walsh, expressed a little interest. But eventually, it came down to Hiram. "When all is said and done, I have no regrets," Miller said. "I was a four-year starter at center on the varsity squad every game of my career. I pretty much played all the time. I couldn't have done that at a Division I school."

During Miller's freshman year, he played alongside Brad Ellis, the Geneva sharpshooter who went on to become coach of the Eagles for several successful seasons and is in the ACBF Hall of Fame while also serving as president of the ACBF.

"He was at the heyday of his career," Miller said. "He was a good shooter and a good teammate and player."

For his own part, Miller averaged about 13 points per game in his career, winding

SEE MILLER, 18



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Prosecutor *Nick Tarocci*

## CARLSON: Edgewood graduate played in college at Grove City (Pa.)

FROM PAGE 5

on the 1960 Ohio State team with Bobby Knight.

Carlson started every game his freshman year, averaging 8.6 points per game for the Wolverines and shooting 56 percent from three-point range.

He injured an ankle his sophomore year and sat out several games, never regaining his starting position that season. Carlson also sat out his junior year, but returned for his senior season.

That was a successful season for him, as he averaged 11.7 points per game and earned second-team all-conference honors.

The Wolverines, meanwhile, won the

conference championship outright.

"I don't recall honestly being upset by not starting (my sophomore year following the ankle injury) because I knew I was a valuable part of the team and team success is what mattered," Carlson said.

"For a long time I had the team record for three-pointers. I had one game where I was 6-of-6 from three-point land. That was the highest percentage of three-point shots made in a game. As of the last couple of years that record was still standing. Somebody has probably surpassed it by now. I worked hard on my outside shot."

At Grove City, Carlson majored in

communications and psychology. After obtaining his bachelor's degree, he moved to Slippery Rock State University in Pennsylvania and earned a master's degree in student personnel administration.

Carlson's first job after getting his master's was at the University of New Orleans, where he spent three years. He moved back north then, obtaining a job at Ball State.

Carlson has worked in higher education for 25 years, including 19 as a career counselor.

For the past six years, he has worked as the registrar at Grace College in northern Indiana, a liberal arts school of 2,300 students.

Carlson met his wife, Amy, at Grove City.

"I found a good one," he said.

The couple has been married 25 years. They have two children — son, Grant, 21, who will graduate from college in May and daughter, Jodie, 20, a sophomore at Geneva College, near Pittsburgh.

"I had a great time playing for Edgewood, with some terrific friends and teammates, and for Al (Goodwin)," Carlson said. "The crowds were great. Those times were a lot of fun."

## APONTE: Hoops star earned NLCAA honors from 1987-89 at Dyke

FROM PAGE 4

But Aponte became the main scorer after Hanna graduated and averaged about 20 points and 15 rebounds per game as a senior, earning first-team honors.

That raised his stock so that Aponte received the scholarship offers from Walsh and Dyke.

Ten games into his freshman year, he became a starter with the Demons.

"That year we made the national finals of the NLCAA (National Little College Athletic Association)," Aponte said. "In the championship game we lost to Bristol College in Tennessee. I started at center at 6-foot-5 or 6-6, playing against guys 7-feet or 6-10. I started the last three seasons as well. I ended up as the second all-time leading rebounder with 1,046 rebounds and fourth-leading scorer with 1,471 points.

Dyke later became Myers University, then, after a financial scandal, Chancellor University.

"They discontinued the sports program, so I'm probably to this day the second-lead-

ing rebounder and fourth-leading scorer," Aponte said. "I'm only the second player in school history to get 1,000 points and 1,000 rebounds."

His sophomore and senior years from 1987 and 1989, Aponte was named to the NLCAA All-American team with 14 other players and went on a tour to Caribbean islands, playing teams from Aruba and Curacao.

Aponte majored in marketing at Dyke, a business school. His first job was around Cleveland with a company called Captain Tony's, a chain of restaurants.

In 1992, Aponte moved to Chicago and work at the Lodge Management Group, a night club chain.

Then, in 1996, he returned to Ashtabula County to take a job with Premix, which is now named A. Schulman, where he now serves as Global Key Account Manager.

"This is the best job I ever had," Aponte said.

He played basketball in summer leagues after graduation, including a stint on a team which included former Cleveland Cavalier Ron Harper.

As a child, his dad had taken him to the races at Raceway 7. At some point, Aponte's interest in racing rekindled.

"I was talking with my wife (Kimberly) 10 or 12 years ago and she said I should try it," Aponte said. "I bought a car and we worked on it. I got out on the track and (raced) for 10 years. I won the track championship at Raceway 7 in 2009. It was a neat experience, very enjoyable."

Carlos and Kimberly (nee Luce, who also played basketball at Ashtabula), a teacher, have two children — Ayden, 19, a freshman at Kent State University and Carly, a senior at Lakeside, who plays basketball for the girls team.

Carlos' brother, Jayson once scored 43 points in a game, an Ashtabula High School record. Carlos himself holds the rebounding record for rebounds with 26 in a game.

"I got 26 on 6-foot-9 Fred Galle, who played for Edgewood," Carlos said. "He works for A. Schulman too. Of course I brag it up. My daughter had 21 rebounds in a game. I thought, 'You'd better stop. I don't want you to get 26.'"



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# Sabo excelled on the court at Conneaut

BY CHRIS LARICK

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Conneaut High School basketball players and fans were accustomed to coaches who were well-enough acquainted with the talents of their players to run an offense that fit those talents.

Coach Jerry Sweed, who coached Denny Sabo and the rest of the Spartans squad of 1974-1975, wanted to run and gun. That style didn't fit the players.

"It didn't work out so well," Sabo said, in reference to Conneaut's 9-10 record that season.

The Spartans had been a very competent squad when Sabo was a sophomore in 1972-73, making it to the district finals before falling to Barberton, the top-ranked team in the state.

"Four of their guys went on to college," Sabo said. "We got pretty far down, but came back. I think we lost by about 20. We scored 70 though. They had a super team and

took it to us pretty good."

Sabo, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on Sunday at the Conneaut Human Resources center, played with different teams in his three years as a starter.

As a sophomore, the group included point guard with Tim Humphrey, Ron Grubke inside, Tim Wheeler and John Stolson.

When Humphrey, Grubke graduated, Bill Dawson joined the group.

On Sabo's senior team were Danny Sharp, Jim Lebzelter, Mark Sanford and John Cournet, along with Sabo.

"Harbor, with Jim Bradley, and Ashtabula were pretty good," Sabo said. "But I think Geneva won the NEC that year. We ended up beating Harbor and Ashtabula.

"My junior year the Ashtabula game at Ball Gym was probably our best game. We beat them

SEE SABO, 19



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Denny Sabo is pictured with wife, Beth Ann. In his senior season at Conneaut, he shared Player of the Year honors for the Regional Press All-Ashtabula County team.

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# Erickson used work ethic to succeed in hoops, life

BY CHRIS LARICK

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Paul Erickson's father gave him an inheritance more valuable than any possession or amount of money — the gift of an appreciation for hard work.

Arnold Erickson, Paul's dad, played basketball at Ashtabula High School under legendary coach Bob Ball in the late 1930s before earning a scholarship to Mount Union College.

In his sophomore year, Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor and Arnold left school to join the Navy.

"My dad was a pilot and a career man in the Navy," said Paul, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on Sunday. "Growing up, we moved around quite a bit.

In 1958, we were stationed in Hawaii when my dad left the Navy. He and my mom thought about moving to Florida, but it was too hot, so we came back to Ashtabula."

When Erickson took up basketball (as well as other sports), he took to heart the words his father had been drilling into him and his siblings for years.

"My dad always asked us ... Does practice make perfect?" Erickson said. "The correct answer was, 'No' ... Practice makes habits ... Perfect practice makes perfect."

His father built a basketball court in the back yard, and Erickson, like so many boys of that time, practiced endlessly, day and night, sun



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Paul Erickson is pictured with Ed Armstrong and Brian Gaines. The Harbor graduate led his team in points and rebounds per game his senior season.**

or snow.

"When I was a freshman, I was 6-3 but I was pretty thin," he said. "I started lifting weights and began running wearing a weight vest and weight spats. I ran in my neighborhood, at Walnut Beach and up and down the steps behind the Harbor library. I stayed with this regimen of lifting and running throughout my high school years. I got my weight up from 160 pounds to 200

by my senior year and could dunk by my junior year.

Erickson went out for basketball in his sophomore year and coach Ed Armstrong put me on the varsity team

That was back in 1961, Armstrong's first year as varsity head coach of the Mariners.

And he knew Erickson had one invaluable asset in basketball.

"He said, 'I can teach you

a lot of things, but I can't teach tall,'" Erickson said. "My job at the beginning was to rebound and play defense. In the first game (of my sophomore year) we played Edgewood on that stage at the old high school. I started the second quarter and every game after that. He gave me the opening to play, but it was up to me to take advantage of that."

It turned out that Armstrong was exactly the type

of coach Erickson needed.

"He was defensive-minded, an intense guy, the kind of coach you wanted to play for," Erickson said. "We had winning records all three years. We played a tough man-to-man and a zone, and tried to fast break out of both defenses. I respected him as a very good coach who took charge. He always got the most out of his teams. Teamwork was key."

The Mariners went 11-9 his sophomore year and were tri-champs of the Western Reserve League, but lost key players like Mike Kane, Jim Nyland and Dick Huhta to graduation for Erickson's junior year (1962-63).

Only Erickson and Dave Turner returned as letter-winners.

That duo was joined by seniors Jim Macauley, John Laird, Dave Tallbacka and Thad Hague and juniors Brian Gaines, Rodger Gustafson, Jim Lengyel, Terry Anthony, Dick Candela and Gary Karbacka .

Harbor went 11-7 that year with Erickson leading the way at 255 points and 291 rebounds.

Erickson was fifth in WRL scoring, averaging 13.6 points per game, and seventh in the county at 13.1 points per contest.

In his senior year, Gustafson, who had developed into one of Harbor's best players, tore up his knee during the football season, leaving Erickson and Gaines, along with an Ashtabula transfer John Bucko to lead

# Versatile Weaver has made an impact at PV, in county prep sports

BY CHRIS LARICK

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WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

**State track official Ron Weaver, who is the former athletic director at Pymatuning Valley High School, checks out the hurdles at Columbus during the Ohio High School Athletic Association State Track Meet last June.**

It's the ninth inning of Game 7 of the 2016 World Series.

The score is tied at 6-6 between the Chicago Cubs and Cleveland Indians at Progressive Field.

Ron Weaver and his co-workers at the Cleveland Indians shop at Progressive Field are poised with razor blades over the 150 boxes containing caps, t-shirts and sweatshirts. Lonnie Chisenall hits a long drive.

This could be it.

But no, the ball sails foul by inches and the Indians eventually lose the game and the World Series.

The valuable Major League World Championship paraphernalia with the Indians' logos won't be worn.

"They buried them somewhere," Weaver said. "Sometimes (in the past) they sent them to third world countries. But now they're all rotting somewhere."

That the Indians entrusted Weaver with such a serious responsibility is hardly surprising.

Weaver, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on Sunday as a contributor, has a lengthy resume of service in high school sports in the community.

In basketball, Weaver served as sectional/district girls basketball manager for

more than 35 years. Prior, he served as coach for the freshmen at Pymatuning Valley in basketball, a sport he didn't know all that well going in.

"Bob Hitchcock (head basketball coach at PV at the time and a charter member of the ACBF Hall of Fame) said he needed a freshman basketball coach," Weaver said. "He gave me a lot of help and the players didn't need much coaching. I did

that for two or three years. When I got the athletic director job, I had to give it up."

Weaver grew up in Mahoning County and at North Lima High School, he played football, ran track and a little bit of basketball.

After graduation in 1962, he ran track and cross country at Mount Union.

"My sophomore year I broke the school record for the two-mile at Baldwin Wallace," Weaver said. "A fresh-

man came in and broke it. I knew it was time to leave."

Weaver's first job after college graduation was at Black River, where he spent five years, coaching football and track.

In 1971, he was hired at Pymatuning Valley, which was in the process of building a new high school, one with outstanding athletic facilities for its time, including a nice basketball court and an all-weather track.

In 2 1/2 years, Weaver became athletic director, a job he held from 1974 or 1975 to 2001.

"We had the first all-weather track in the NEC (North-eastern Conference)," Weaver said of his early days as AD at Pymatuning Valley. "We could not compete with Harbor, St. John and Ashtabula in football. In basketball, we held our own. In track we were very young, but we won anyway. We got our boys to the district finals in Euclid."

Because of the all-weather track, PV hosted many tournaments, including some previously held as far away as Austintown Fitch.

PV also hosted basketball tournaments, including sectionals and districts. Weaver directed most of those events, hiring officials and doing many other tasks the job required.

"Ron Richards and Frank Roskovics always helped me," Weaver said. "We had a lot of people helping. We had to take all the results down. We ran through a lot of carbon paper."

In basketball, Weaver received invaluable assistance from Ross Boggs, Mel Nowakowski, Al Goodwin and Bob Callahan.

The basketball tournament has moved to Grand Valley and Weaver, retired, helps Michele Boiarski run the tournament.

Over the years, Weaver has

SEE **WEAVER**, 20

# Taft was a force on the boards at Jefferson

BY CHRIS LARICK

sports@starbeacon.com

In the early 1960s, several Ashtabula County high school basketball teams were forced into a transitional game, but not the kind most readers would expect.

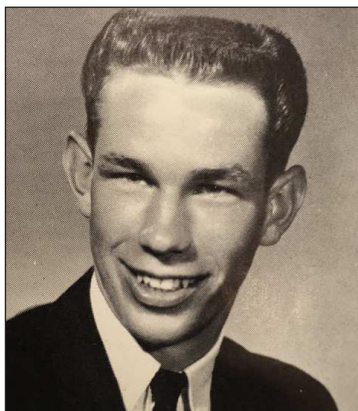
Schools like Jefferson, Edgewood, Perry and Rowe of the seven-team Western Reserve League had extremely small gymnasiums, while others in the same league — Chardon, Madison and Harbor — had larger ones.

“With (their) congested conditions that created certain difficulties within each individual’s play,” said Mickey Zigmund, a 1964 Jefferson graduate and a 2013 inductee into the Ashtabula Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame.

“All of us had to adapt to playing on the bigger floors at Chardon, Madison or Harbor. Teams could not play man-to-man on the small floors because of the congestion. I remember vividly players using the referee for baseline picks because he just couldn’t get out of the way.”

Most of the Jefferson players had grown up playing on smaller floors. One of the starters those years, Jon Freeman had the somewhat-mixed blessing of having played at Dorset with a larger court.

“My junior year we played on the old gym at the (Jefferson) elementary school,” Freeman said



Ken Taft

when he was inducted into the ACBF Hall of Fame in 2014. “We called it the matchbox. It’s torn down now.”

Of the Falcon players on the 1962-1963 team that produced the best boys basketball record in school history (18-3), Zigmund and Freeman were shooting guards.

Ken Taft, who will be inducted into the ACBF Hall of Fame posthumously on Sunday, was the rebounder and high-post scorer.

“Ken Taft was 6-foot-3 and maybe 170-175 pounds,” Zigmund said. “He had freakishly wide shoulders, long arms and huge hands. Once he got his hands on the ball, it remained secure. I don’t ever remember anyone slapping the ball away from his grasp although many have tried.

“Ken was a catch-and-shoot player, never putting the ball on the floor or dribbling for any reason and I credit the small-packed playing conditions for that. Against zones, Ken would break to the



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The 1962-63 Jefferson boys basketball team Ken Taft played on.

corner on some situations and was quick with his jumper to become a really good scorer. He had good lift to his shot, allowing him to get shots over taller defenders. He often played the high post against zones and eventually became a good passer as well as scorer.

But rebounding was his real talent.

“He was elite,” Zigmund said. “He was just amazing, holding his own against some very talented, bigger players .... Besides being our leading scorer, Ken probably had double figures in rebounds as well (in 1962-1963).”

That year’s team, coached by Herb Smolka, included nine seniors and Zigmund, a junior, Zigmund.

Larry Bragg was another well-known county player who came off the bench.

They were upset by Geneva in the sectionals at

Ball Gym in Ashtabula.

“We played a 1-2-2 (offense),” Freeman said. “I was probably the right guard, or right wing. I was only 6-, but I could jump pretty well. Sometimes, I dropped down low.

“We had a good team with several scorers and rebounders. We probably had the best percentage of wins in school history.”

For Taft and the other seniors, that season was by far their best.

“It wasn’t a great success story in terms of wins and losses for us (7-11) his junior season,” Zigmund said. “But it was a vast improvement over the 2-17 of his junior season. We never won a game on a big floor that (1961-1962) year. Ken did receive many first-team honors that year for his efforts.”

Taft used what he had learned that season to improve his game for a big senior season, according

to Zigmund.

“Ken’s senior year brought Jefferson into our then-new school and full-size floor,” he said. “Ken continued developing his game to include now a great turn-around jump shot from either the right or left elbow (foul line extended).

“He’d break from the opposite low post and, with great footwork, catch, pivot and shoot at the top of his jump in what seemingly looked effortlessly. I can still in my mind ‘see’ his release with the wrist snap and the ball coming off those long, straight fingers. Again, he would never put the ball on the floor.”

Taft’s game evolved.

“I also recall Ken on our full-court press break moving to the half-court area, getting the pass and hitting a streaking guard breaking down the sideline time after time for easy shots,” Zigmund said.

“Hard to believe, but Ken was an even better rebounder that year, probably because there was less congestion now.... We only played two games on small gym floors and never felt the negative effects of being in such small surroundings. We won the league, went 18-3 overall and was the tournament’s top seed.... It was an absolute pleasure watching Ken play those two seasons.”

Taft scored 116 points in 14 games as a sophomore,



## FERL: Conneaut grad won the Bob Smith Memorial Trophy as best senior athlete

FROM PAGE 7

At the end of his senior year, Ferl won the Bob Smith Memorial Trophy as the best senior athlete in all sports. He also graduated in 1972 near the top of his class.

Ferl played basketball at Hiram until injuries “took that out of the equation” as he puts it. He continued to play baseball at Hiram while studying biology.

After graduating from Hiram, Ferl took his Ph.D. at Indiana University at the time Bobby Knight was the coach and Isiah Thom-

as a player.

“I played a lot of AAU basketball there,” Ferl said. “I played an awful lot of basketball in Indiana.”

Ferl became a molecular biologist and eventually moved from Indiana to Florida.

He is now a Distinguished Professor at the University of Florida.

“I still kept on playing basketball,” he said.

He has been at the University of Florida for 36 years, now spending most of his time as a research scientist.

“I have done a lot of

work on the space program at Kennedy Space Center,” Ferl said. “I spent six summers in the Arctic. Science takes me a lot of interesting places.”

He met his wife, Mary-Blythe, who is from Lakewood, at Hiram. She is a historian, working at the Florida Museum of Natural History, part of UF.

“In my later years, basketball has become harder and harder for me,” Ferl said.

“Mary-Blythe got me into running marathons. We come up regularly to Cleveland to do the Cleveland

Marathon and Half Marathon.

Rob and Mary-Blythe have a son, Evan, 31, who lives in San Francisco with his wife, Courtney.

Ferl’s father, Joe is a member of the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club Hall of Fame. His mother, Joanne, still lives in Conneaut.

“It’s a special thing,” Ferl said of his own upcoming induction. “I’m incredibly honored, especially when you look at the people in there, all those great athletes, to be placed in that group.”

## BURNS: Jefferson grad shined at the collegiate level

FROM PAGE 6

Burns also connected on 16 straight free throws to end the season. The next season, she led the Cavs in scoring with 380 points, a 13.6 average, scoring 20 or more in six games.

She led the team in scoring 10 times and earning second team All-Mid-American Conference honors.

In 1997, Burns was again a second-teamer on the all-conference team. That year, she averaged 12.1 points a game and topped the Cavs with 76 3-pointers.

Burns tallied double figures 20 times.

In one three-game stretch, she scored 78 points (26 per contest).

Burns was named tournament MVP in the Express Sports/Papa Bears Tournament and scored 27 in a win over NAIA Division I Power Central State.

Named a tri-captain before her senior season, Burns red-shirted after undergoing season-ending knee surgery just three games in.

Burns is a member of Walsh’s Wall of Fame. In her three-plus seasons, she scored 1,016 points and added 213 steals and 183 assists.

“I blew out my ACL my senior year after

three games, but came back the next year. I got compartment syndrome,” she said. “They wanted to do surgery, but I didn’t want it.”

Still, Burns reached the 1,000-point career mark. At Walsh, Burns earned a degree in biology with the intention of becoming a chiropractor.

As soon as she graduated, Burns started the four years of graduate school it took to become a chiropractor, studying at New York Chiropractic College and later at Cleveland Chiropractic College in Los Angeles. She now owns at a chiropractic clinic in Hendersonville, North Carolina.

In the meantime, Burns has obtained a franchise in her own CrossFit gym, CrossFit HLV in Hendersonville.

“There are no machines,” she said. “It’s functional fitness, with things like medicine balls and barbells.”

Burns spends time with her parents, siblings, nephews and three dogs. Recently, she has become involved in Elite Spartan races, a strenuous form of endurance racing with obstacles and penalties and competes in CrossFit Competitions and runs endurance trail races.

## GREENE: Rhea played one season with her sister, Nara, for Geneva’s varsity team

FROM PAGE 8

a job with a commercial real estate developer after graduation from Wofford.

She has spent the past seven years working for Trinity Partners and made partner in that company three years ago.

Greene is the youngest partner in the firm at 33. Commercial Real Estate has been criticized for being a male-dominated industry which was no issue

for Greene.

In fact, it’s one thing that attracted her to the industry.

“It’s like playing sports with all the guys again,” she joked. “Our firm happens to be an outlier in the industry; we have a lot of women in leadership positions, which is something that I want to continue to foster and grow.”

Greene and husband, Jonathan, who is in real estate development and a Charlotte native), married five years

ago. The couple has a daughter, Lulu (a twist on her dad, Louis’s first name), 2 1/2 years old, and Max, eight months old.

“I can’t talk more positively about my sports experience at Geneva High School, from the coaches, to my friends,” she said. “They taught me so much about hard work and that you’re not going to win all the time. The ‘glory’ moments are far and few between, but you have

to work hard and stick with whatever you are doing to get results.

“There are so many people who had an impact in my high school career and my success. I’m thankful to my friends, family, the school and my mom (Jeanette) and dad for playing sports with us. It boils down to a single thing — playing basketball in our driveway. We’d get knocked down, get our knees skinned, and I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

# MILLER: Terriers won conference in his senior season, made playoffs

FROM PAGE 11

up with either point totals in the 980s for the Terriers.

Playing center, Miller contributed, especially on the offensive end of the court, from his freshman season.

“I got a good share of rebounds, too, and was always a pretty good shot-blocker,” he said. “I had a pretty good leap for my height. I got my first dunk in competition as a sophomore in high school. I hung on the rim and got a technical.”

Miller majored in business management at Hiram. He was a President’s Athletic Conference honorable-mention pick as a freshman, moved up to the second team by his junior year and earned third-team honors as a senior.

In 2000, he was inducted into the Hiram College Athletic Hall of Fame.

“We won the league my senior season and made the Division III playoffs,” Miller said. “We went to Norwich, Connecticut. There were four teams there. We lost

the first game, but the second night we won the consolation game. It was a wonderful experience.”

After graduation, he went into the Electrolux Vacuum Cleaner trainee program before beginning a career in the lumber industry with 84 Lumber.

Miller spent 19 years, before moving to Carter Lumber, where he has worked for the past 10 years. He is currently in Burton, Michigan, near Flint. His wife, Laura, works for the City of Flint water department.

Alan and Laura have two sons — Warren, 22; and Andrew, 20. Both have inherited Alan’s height. Warren is 6-10 and Andrew 6-7 or 6-9. Andrew played basketball at Mott Junior College for a year.

Alan has a brother, David, two years younger than he is, who is retired from the military and now works at Wright-Patterson.

“There are a lot of good basketball players in (the Flint) area,” Miller said. “I have an opportunity to see a lot of great basketball. I don’t play much any more.”

# SKIPPER: Geneva grad scored 1,000 points in both high school and at Wooster College

FROM PAGE 9

said. “We had a connection on the court. Most times, I could tell what she was going to do before she did it. I knew the look she’d get right before she stole the ball or made an amazing assist. She brought a lot of energy to our team.”

Skipper scored 1,006 career points in high school and was a top-flight rebounder.

“I remember trying to get a double-double each game,” she said.

By her sophomore year at Geneva, Skipper had decided she wanted to play college basketball.

“Then (college) coaches started showing up to watch me play,” she said. “It was cool having college coaches watch our games.”

She and her parents, Louis and Jeannette, discussed what college offer she should take.

“I had a conversation with my parents whether to play Division III or Division II,” Skipper said. “I visited Wooster and fell in love with the college. I knew I could come in and make an impact as a freshman. I wanted to play from the start. It’s a smaller school, Division III.”

Skipper started weightlifting when she was told she needed to put on weight and get stronger. Though short for a college forward, she was a good leaper. Getting stronger made Skipper an even better rebounder.

The Fighting Scots weren’t very good when Skipper arrived on campus, but improved rapidly. By her senior year, she had high expectations.

Then it happened.

“Before the first game I went for the ball and tore my ACL,” Skipper said. “That was a big

blow. I thought at first I tweaked it, but I found out I was finished for the season. It hurt. We were supposed to have a great year and I had to sit on the sideline and watch.”

By that time Skipper, though, had reached one of her main goals — scoring 1,000 points.

“I was on track to set (school) records,” she said. “But I could at least be proud of that.”

During college, Skipper was North Coast Athletic Conference Newcomer of the Year as a freshman, was a three-time All-NCAC selection and totaled 1,061 points and 794 rebounds, averaging a double-double each year.

Skipper majored in English with a minor in childhood education. After graduation, she earned a master’s degree at John Carroll and started teaching

first grade in Charlotte, North Carolina for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System.

“I really liked young kids,” she said. “The English part was because I wanted to write children’s books.”

Meanwhile, Rhea introduced Nara to her husband Jeff, who was working in Charlotte but coaching volleyball on the side with Rhea’s college coach.

“We went on a blind date, got married in 2008 and are very happily married,” she said.

When the Skippers started having children, Nara quit teaching to raise the family.

Since then, she had started working with her father and brother in a custom packaging company called CompanyBox.

The Skippers have three children — Ayla, 7; Lincoln, 4; and Calvin, 2.

# TURNER: GV graduate excelled at baseball

FROM PAGE 10

He signed with the Mets and played for a while with the Binghamton, New York team.

After being released by the Mets, Turner gave it a final shot with the Minnesota Twins,

but he was cut.

“I had had enough,” he said. “It was getting pretty tough on our finances. I was kind of lost, with no education. I started in construction and did a couple of other things. After a while, I started working for the postal service (in

Champion, Ohio, near Warren) and have done that for 16 years.”

The Turners have two children at Champion High School — Michael, a senior and Megan, a junior. Both have earned scholarships at Kent State — Michael for baseball

and Megan for softball.

“My whole life I’ve coached them in baseball and softball, from the age of 5 up,” Turner said. “I still love to coach. I tried to be the head coach (at Champion), but they didn’t want fathers involved in it.”

# SABO: Conneaut graduate was chosen to the Class AAA All-State squad

FROM PAGE 13

in overtime. My senior year our best game was probably against Riverside. That was probably one of my better all-around games. We'd run and gun my senior year, my sophomore year too. Wheeler was getting a lot of rebounds."

In addition to basketball, Sabo played the outfield on the baseball team.

He quit football as a freshman, concentrat-

ing on basketball and baseball.

"We had a pretty good baseball team all three years," he said. "Ron Young was our coach. I batted about .400 all three seasons."

After Sabo's senior season, he shared Player of the Year honors for the Regional Press All-Ashtabula County team with Bradley.

"Sabo became the top guard in the county from the very beginning of the season as

he finished with a 15.2 scoring average and also led the Northeastern Conference in assists and steals," Mike Starkey wrote in the Star Beacon. "The senior guard stands 5-10."

Others on that team included Wayne Games and Dan Craine of Geneva, Chris Hamman and Carl Renwick of Grand Valley, Pete Candela of St. John, Bill Osborne of Ashtabula, Pete Richards of Edgewood, Jim Searcy of Jefferson and Randy Linsted of Pymatuning

Valley. Lebzelter and Danny Sharp of Conneaut earned honorable-mention honors.

In the state UPI voting, Sabo was the only cager chosen to the Class AAA All-State squad, earning honorable mention status.

After graduation, Sabo started college at Youngstown State, playing basketball and baseball.

"I played basketball my freshman year, then found a job in the steel mill," he said. "It wasn't working out in college,

so I decided it was time to get a job."

Sabo worked at Union Carbide for 30 years and retired 10 years ago.

He and his second wife, Beth, moved to California, then to Arizona, near both the Nevada and California borders, where they have spent the past year-and-a-half.

Beth (nee Shaffer) is a 1986 Ashtabula graduate.

The couple lives in a 55-and-older recreational vehicle resort, where they work part time.

"I work outside, do a little groundskeeping and landscaping," Sabo said. "My wife works in the office. I tore out my shoulder and can't do a whole lot (of sports). We play a lot of putt-putt (golf). If I shoot baskets, I have to shoot left-handed."

Sabo has a daughter, Joline, who lives in Ashtabula with his three grandchildren —Jalin, Leila and Brandon.

"Brandon is pretty much into football," Sabo said. "He plays a little basketball."

# TAFT: Jefferson graduate developed game in senior season

FROM PAGE 17

205 in 18 games as a junior and 288 in 21 games (13.8 average) as a senior for a career total of 609.

He averaged a double-double both his junior and senior years, including nearly 20 rebounds per game in the WRL his senior year. In back-

to-back games as a junior, Taft recorded 25 and 39 rebounds.

Taft was named first-team All-WRL as a junior and was second-team Regional

Press All-County.

He repeated as WRL first-teamer as a senior and was on the first-team all-tournament team, in addition to being acknowledged as Ashtabula

County's top rebounder.

Taft wasn't interested in going to college after high school and joined the Navy, where spent 22 years.

Taft ended up as a

warrant officer before retiring.

He never returned to Ashtabula County, as far as any of his basketball friends know and died in 2014.

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# ERICKSON: In senior season, Harbor grad led Mariners in both scoring, rebounding

FROM PAGE 14

the Mariners.

Harbor finished second to Ashtabula in the City Series in Erickson's senior year.

Others who contributed that year included seniors Doug Behn and Terry Anthony and juniors Bob Bernardo, John Palo, Greg Schillo and Rick Perez.

Armstrong downplayed his team's chances that year.

"I figure we'll have to fight hard to break even," he said, but later admitted, "I think we have a better-than-average club, so no team will be able to key on one man and stop us. Overall, I have the best material since I became head coach."

That year, Erickson had 321 points in 21 games, nearly 16 per contest in Harbor's low-scoring offense. He added 232 rebounds to lead the team in both categories.

Erickson was honored as the team MVP, first-team All-City, All-County, All-WRL and named honorable mention All-American by Coach and Athlete Magazine.

Like many of his teammates, Erickson was an all-around athlete. At graduation, he had earned eight athletic letters.

"I remember the

rivalries," Erickson said. "My junior year it was very good, they had lost only one game all year when we beat them (in double overtime) late in the season. They had Jim Golen, Mickey Zigmund, Jon Freeman and Ken Taft.

"That was the only game my grandfather ever saw me play and I got thrown out close to the end of the second overtime. It was a very physical game. Jim Golen and I came down together with a rebound and got in each other's face. The refs asked us both to get off the court. We played Jefferson in the tournament that year and they beat us in the "rubber" game. Ken Taft got really hot. He scored 30 points.

"My senior year (7-foot-tall) Jim Gilbert played for Ashtabula. It was a huge rivalry. Even bigger in my house because my dad had played for Ashtabula. The first game we won in overtime, 61-59. The second game was at Harbor, the City Series championship game, and they beat us, 59-58. We played them a third time in the tournament. We held Gilbert to only 10 points, but they beat us again. It was a great series."

After graduation,

Erickson headed to Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania on a full grant-in-aid and athletic appreciation grant, a newly-created award.

"It was an NAIA school and freshmen could play varsity," he said. "I made the starting team my freshman year, but the first or second game I went up for a rebound, caught the rim between my fingers and broke a couple of bones in my hand. That ended that season. Early in my sophomore year I was going to dunk and the guy guarding me took my legs out from under me. I came down on my elbow and separated my shoulder. Took a chip of bone out of the socket. That was another season down the drain."

"The next year I transferred to Kent State-Ashtabula and changed my major from engineering to business. I played for the basketball team that year." That was 1966-1967.

"I married my high school sweetheart (Karen Edwards) in the spring of 1967, went to work for Kroger Company and moved to the main campus in Kent in the fall. I graduated from Kent with a degree in marketing in

1969."

After he graduated from Kent, Erickson started working for the Campbell Soup Company, specializing in institutional sales.

His entire career has focused on the grocery industry.

Erickson worked with a major advertising agency (handling Lloyd J. Harriss Pies), a high volume merchandising company (handling Johnson & Johnson), was general manager at Old Fashioned Kitchens, a kosher foods plant and president of Indian Summer-East, an apple product company.

He later purchased an apple juice company from Indian Summer, owning it for five years before selling it.

Erickson, who moved to Florida three years ago and his wife, who will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in May.

They two children. Daughter, Michele, has her PhD in physical therapy and manages a physical therapy clinic in North Carolina. Son, Christopher, is in the real estate and transportation business in Florida. Christopher has seven children.

"I try to keep busy, play a little golf and stay involved in my kids' lives," he said.

# WEAVER: Official has had many roles in high school athletics

FROM PAGE 15

claimed many accomplishments:

- He was an athletic administrator and OWA coordinator for 26 years.
- He has been a registered track official for the past 48 years and is past president of the Mahoning Valley Track Officials Association and for the past six years, has been its Rules Interpreter.

- His coaching career includes seven years of football, three of basketball and eight of track and cross country.

- He has served as sectional/district girls basketball manager for 35 years, district boys and girls track manager for more than 30 and has worked district and regional track meets as well as the Ohio State track meet for more than 30.

Among the many citations he has received are the following: Ashtabula County Outstanding Track Award, 1991; Perry Public Schools Athletic Department Community Service Award, 1992; Distinguished Service Award from the Ohio Track and Cross Country Coaches Association, 1998; Northeast District

Athletic Director of the Year, 1998; Election to the State Athletic Administrators Hall of Fame, 2015; Recipient of the OHSAA State Sportsmanship, Ethics and Integrity Award, 2007; and Chairman of the Ashtabula County Track and Cross Country Hall of Fame Committee, ongoing.

Though Weaver has had plenty of help along the way, he frets that might not be the case for those who follow in his footsteps.

"In a lot of our sports, the officials are getting older," Weaver said. "It's hard to get young guys in it."

For the past 20 years, Weaver has held the job mentioned at the beginning with the Cleveland Indians. When he started, there were several Cleveland Indians shops and he had to travel at times from Erie to Sandusky.

Weaver's family consists of son, Brian, who has two children with his wife, Diane (Alexis and Jeremy) and daughter, Brenda, who has children, Jaden and Makenna with her husband, Tomas.

Weaver enjoys visiting his children and grandchildren every chance he gets.

# The 2016-17 girls basketball season



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

Pymatuning Valley's Haley Holt (12) battles Mathews' Emily Strasma for the ball during a girls basketball game in the 2016-17 season.



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

Jefferson's Gabby Wagner splits defenders Geneva's Alex Shafer (right) and Grand Valley's Cassandra Gallo during the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Senior Classic at Edgewood High School earlier this month.

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# The 2016-17 boys basketball season



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

Edgewood's Brevin White (21) passes the ball in a boys basketball game against SPIRE.



WARREN DILLAWAY | THE STAR BEACON

Lakeside's Robert Walker goes up for a rebound in a 206-17 boys basketball game.



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

St. John's Nate Severino (right) leaps for the ball with Conneaut's Austin Dale in a 2017-17 regular season boys basketball game..

## ACBF golf tournament June 10

NORTH KINGSVILLE — The third annual Tom Henson ACBF (Ashtabula County Basketball

Foundation) Golf Tournament is scheduled for June 10 at Village Green Golf Course. Registration

is at 9 a.m. and tee time is 10 a.m. For more information, call Steve Kray at 440-998-1413.

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