

2010 Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame



Stephen Schaffer

When one considers what it takes to be recognized as an extraordinarily accomplished person in any profession, vocation, or personal endeavor, a hallmark of excellence can be measured in depth & breadth over a sustained period of time. It also helps if one is blessed with a personal pedigree in the family tree allowing that to blossom. In Stephen Schaffer, we see exactly that, with a tradition & pattern of such involvement in the Saugerties sports scene, and much farther beyond.

Born June 8, 1959 in Kingston N.Y., Stephen Schaffer was the first of two sons born to Nancy and William W. “Boo” Schaffer. With his sisters Catherine Flanigan and Betsy Weber preceding him, and his younger brother William (Billy) J. following shortly, they grew up in the village of Saugerties, living on Montgomery Street in the shadow of the Cantine Paper Mill off of Partition Street. As the grandson of Joe Sweeney, a 1970 Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame inductee, it came as no surprise that an early age excellence in athletics became the foundation of young Steve, spring-boarding him in a variety of sports.

Like most active and athletic youths, Steve played in the Saugerties Little League from 1969 through 1971 for the Ferroxcube Pirates. As a lefthander, he pitched and played first base, and played the outfield for the 1971 All Star team that won the District 15 championship.

He progressed to the Saugerties Babe Ruth League, playing 3 years for the American Legion, coached by Ken Hallion and Ed Tammany. Again, he was mainly a pitcher, with occasional duty at first base and centerfield. He played on the 13 year old All Star team in 1972, as well as the 14/15 year old teams in the following years, where in 1974 he played on the district winning All Star team that went to the NY State tournament in Vestal NY. In 1974, as a 15 year old, he received the Babe Ruth League’s “Athlete of the Year” award. In succeeding years, from 1975 to 1977, he played on the American Legion teams, coached by his father Bill “Boo” Schaffer and Earl Benjamin. In 1977 Steve was part of the Post 72 Legion’s run for the New York State American Legion title. Those Legion sports historians will recall that this team, after winning the Ulster County Championship, came within an out from being the second Saugerties Legion team to make the trip to Cooperstown, however those dreams were dashed when the Saugerties boys lost a heartbreaker in the last inning losing to East Chester, Long Island.

While enjoying significant success on the baseball diamond, Steve’s passion really emerged on the basketball court. Beginning with the 1972-73 SAA Bidy basketball League, Steve played for the Bullets coached by Bud Murphy, and son Tim Murphy – in Steve’s words “A big highlight came in the championship game, scoring 53 points before fouling out in a losing effort to the Celtics 65-63, against Jim Hackett scoring 42 points for the winners. It was an exciting game, where before fouling out, Mr. Murphy disagreed with the call, I would say sternly. He & Tim were great to play for, always pushing to make the team better.” He also played CYO basketball for St Mary’s, in 1972-1973 coached by Fritz Beckert. In that season, they played 62 games

including Winter and Spring teen half court leagues, while being the scorer. Steve garnered three MVP awards along the way, in the CYO Hudson tournament, Biddy league, and the Fred Davi award for the Spring half court league.

Moving onto high school, Steve continued to excel at basketball, playing for the JV team in 1974 and 1975, before moving up to the varsity in his junior year. As a junior in 1976, he averaged 14 points, as an honorable mention on that season's All DCSL team. In 1977 as a senior, he & tri-captains Tim Cole and Jim Hackett led the Sawyers to a sectional berth, defeating Harrison 59-56 in a thrilling game.



Steve drives to hoop at SHS

While in high school, Steve rounded into an overall athlete, in addition to his basketball excellence, playing JV baseball in his sophomore year, and also joined the Varsity Cross Country team for his sophomore, junior, and senior years. He mainly competed to get in shape for basketball, and in doing so emerged as an excellent long distance runner, while enjoying the fun & experience of working with coach Ron Buzon. In addition, Steve chose the varsity track team over baseball in his Junior & Senior years, competing in the 100 yard dash, 220 yard sprint, and anchored the 880 yard relay, as well as the long jump and triple jump. In winning a number of events, Steve's main ambition was to break his uncle Len Sweeney's 100 yard dash record of 10.1 seconds, which he came close at 10.3 seconds.

As a senior in 1977, Steve had the proud distinction of being the second recipient of the Michael Bond award, as an outstanding student-athlete. He is extremely proud of winning this award, following his good friend Jay Harris as the award's first recipient. This is also born out by the fact that while in high school, Steve belonged to the Varsity Club, Leo Club, and yearbook staff. Upon graduating, Steve enrolled in SUNY Cobleskill, playing one year for the men's basketball team, averaging 16 points per game in 1978, as a co-captain. After returning home after a year in college, Steve enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, from 1978 to 1982.

While in the Marines, Steve played on many different service camp softball and basketball teams, from Yuma, Arizona to Jubie Bay in the Philippines, spending 2 years overseas. In 1980 at the Top Gun exercises playing pick up basketball, he was asked to join the Miramar Naval base team. So, for the next 5 weeks they played different base teams such as from the San Diego Marine Depot and Camp Pendleton (near San Diego). Against some very good competition, he played point guard, feeding their 6'8" post player the majority of the time. He also played on the Beaufort (South Carolina) Air Station softball All-Star team at a tournament on Parris Island, involving hundreds of teams throughout the South East, both civilian and military. The tournament went around the clock for 4 days with a couple of games running until the early morning hours. His team took 16th place, which at the time was the best showing of any Marine Corps team.



Steve enjoying time off on base

While stationed overseas, in Iwakuni Japan, he also earned MVP honors of the base squadron softball tournament team as a centerfielder. In 1982, Steve was honorably discharged from the USMC as a Sergeant.

After returning home from the Marines, Steve enjoyed a lot of prominent moments in the Saugerties recreational leagues. In the SAA full court basketball league, he played for Keeley's Korner put together by Joe "Iggy" Maines, from 1983 to 1985, winning two championships, winning the MVP and being the teams leading scorer in one of those years. He also played in the SAA half court basketball leagues 1982-1985 on Winters Real Estate, with John Winters coaching each season, and such players as brother Billy, Mouse Wolven, Iggy Maines, and Arnie Hackett. Every year though Clark Hackett and Steve played the together. Steve recalls "I don't think there is anyone I've played more basketball with than Clark, both half court and full. We won championships each year. And according to John we never lost a game. I think maybe we lost one game."

He also continued to play in the SAA softball league, from 1983-1991, playing on a number of teams such as Boo's Tavern, Lezette Express, Weber Construction, with most of the same players including Clark Hackett as

manager and pitcher. He also played a couple of those years with KTB, and Greco Brothers, joining fellow 2010 Hall of Fame inductee Ralph Longendyke, who pitched. During the same time period, while working at IBM in Kingston, he won a number of Watson Trophy championships in fast-pitch softball, basketball, and volleyball.

In the summer of 1994, Steve moved to Austin, TX, and continued playing in men's over-30 and over-40 basketball leagues, winning two championships. While in Austin, Steve began coaching select girls 6th grade through freshman basketball teams. The teams played over 80 games, traveling to San Antonio, Dallas, and other local tournaments. In addition, Steve coached in the Cedar Park youth soccer leagues.



Steve and Family

Currently, Steve is the owner of Christian Homeschool Athletic Association, residing in Cedar Park, TX, providing physical education to home-schooled children, ages 5-17 yrs. In addition, Steve has started officiating 4A and 5A high school basketball, which has given him a different insight to the game.

Steve, and his wife Susan, have three children: Sara 26, who was married March 20th; Danielle 22, who starred at Varsity volleyball and basketball for 5A Leander High; Stephen 19, played Varsity football and track for Leander High. His wife Susan has two twin boys Jason and Joey, also 22; Joey is serving in the Navy

and Jason is currently attending college. Another proud moment was seeing his son Stephen play linebacker and return kickoffs in front of 7,000 fans in Cedar Park, TX, where football rules in the state. On being a sports parent, Steve remarked, "I was certainly more anxious watching my own children go out on the court or field than I ever was playing myself. But certainly proud of there accomplishments, but always reminding them it's a game."

In terms of sports highlights & recollections, it does not come as a surprise given the Sweeney/Schaffer bloodline that the following fond memory Steve recalls: "My brother Billy was playing high school ball while I was in the service. I never got to see him play football or basketball for the high school but was able to get leave at the end of his senior year and made it to Cantine Field to see him double and then hit the game winning homerun. He had seen so many of my games, including my college games, I was glad to see that one baseball game. Certainly basketball was my passion. I think I was a good scorer, but I was most proud of my rebounding abilities. The quickness of the game and competition and teamwork with those I played most with, such as Iggy (Maines) and Clark (Hackett). Baseball, softball -- certainly my speed helped in all facets of the game -- Stealing bases, tracking down balls in the outfield. Playing in a small town with people you grew up with, and against those you've admired, in any game."

Steve Schaffer was a remarkable athlete. Blessed with natural physical skills, Steve's athletic performance was such that he made everything he did appear easy and effortless. Whether it be pulling up for a jump shot and jumping high over a much taller opponent or gliding across the outfield grass, to haul in a would be extra base hit, Steve Schaffer was one of those rare athletes that was a standout at what ever he did.



Floyd Patterson presents the Michael Bond award to Steve in 1977

In terms of influences and inspiration in his life, Steve has no shortage of those – he cites several prominent locals: "Jack Keeley, Jim Gage, Ron Buzon all were important role models for me growing up. Early memories of being at the Donlon Auditorium to keep score of the premier league games on Saturday afternoons, while Jack kept the book." In Coach Buzon, Steve credits him for his even temperament, patience, and encouragement --- while also remarking he had too much fun being a part of Coach Buzon's teams.

It is clear his main inspiration comes from his father, William W. "Boo" Schaffer: "He taught me to participate and always practice good sportsmanship, win or lose". Steve is exceptionally proud to note with his election, he represents the third generation of his family to be so chosen – with grandfather Joe Sweeney, Sr. inducted in 1970 and father Boo in 1982 – now in 2010, we congratulate Stephen Schaffer in joining them. He truly represents the spirit in earning the honor & privilege of being inducted into the Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame.