

2010 Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame



Ralph S. Longendyke

In 1981 Ralph S. Longendyke and his new bride, the former JoAnn Van Kleeck, with roots firmly planted in the Kingston area, selected Saugerties as the place where they wanted to settle down and raise a family and for the past 29 years have done so with energy and great enthusiasm. With his move to Saugerties, Ralph S. Longendyke brought with him a resume of outstanding high school and collegiate achievements, however this was only the beginning of what was to develop into a long and impressive sports career which, to this day, is still active and watched with admiration by the Saugerties community.

Born 7/29/53 in Kingston N.Y., Ralph S. Longendyke was the older of two sons born to Alberta and the late Ralph D. Longendyke. Ralph and his younger brother Jeff grew up on the outskirts of Kingston and although never a participant in organized youth sports Ralph was very active developing his athleticism and physical toughness in the back yards, fields, and driveways of his Sawkill neighborhood. It wasn't until 1969 that Ralph played his first organized sport, however it would soon become evident that he picked one that he not only would become very good at, but one that he would go on to receive recognition at the highest level in New York State high school athletics.



Ralph makes interception at KHS

Football was Ralph Longendyke's bread and butter. As a member of Tony Badalato's 1970 and 1971 Kingston High School varsity football "Fighting Maroon", Ralph starred as a defensive back and kickoff/ punt returner. Blessed with speed, intelligence, and physical toughness, Ralph led his talented Kingston team on the field as a hard hitting tackler and crafty pass defender. One of Ralph's favorite memories of high school football was the opportunity to play with his brother Jeff. "Jeff played outside linebacker and I played defensive back on the same side. He'd hold them up, and I'd make the hit". "It was

truly one of my most memorable sports experiences. To be able to play football with my brother Jeff was something special”, Ralph proudly boasts.

In 1970 and then again in 1971 Ralph was recognized for his outstanding football abilities when he was selected first team “All-County” and a member of the “Freeman Dream Team” as a defensive back in both years. In 1971 Ralph was further honored by being awarded the prestigious “Tiger Award” as most valuable player for the Kingston High School football team, who in that year received “honorable mention” recognition in the final New York State Big School Rankings. Ralph cites a game against Linton High School of Schenectady where he intercepted 3 passes and scored a touchdown as probably his best individual effort and certainly a game that he will never forget. In closing out the memorable 1971 season, the Kingston High School Fighting Maroon played White Plains for the Section I/Section IX Class AA title however the dream season came to a crashing end with a 30-0 loss to the much larger and physically dominant school led by future Dallas Cowboy receiver Jay Saldi.

It was Ralph’s final high school football accomplishment however, that was arguably his most prestigious achievement when in 1971 he was given “All State” recognition by being selected 3rd Team “All-New York State” as a defensive back. Ralph joined Highland’s great running back Perry Monroe and team mate Jeff Lowe as the only All-State selections from our area that season.

In addition to high school football, Ralph S. Longendyke also starred in track at Kingston High School in 1970 and 1971. Ralph and most of his football team mates used track as a means to stay in shape during the football off season. In 1971 Ralph was co-captain of the Dean Short coached squad and participated in the 440 yard dash as well as the 3rd leg of the 880 yard relay. In 1971 Ralph set a personal best in the 440 by clocking in at 51.2 seconds, one of the fastest times ever recorded by a Kingston 440 runner. In 1971 Ralph’s 880 relay team won the Section IX 880 yard relay race beating out Newburgh for the title, at least initially. Ralph confesses that after the race, his team was disqualified as a result of his crossing lanes on the down stretch of his leg of the race. Although forgiven by his team mates, Ralph’s running gaffe was never forgotten and something his team mates will never let him live down.

After graduating high school Ralph attended Hudson Valley Community College and played football in 1972 and 1973. Ralph recalls the rigid coaching style of then coach, Burr Reeves. “On the first day of tryouts, there were 120 players, all who were either All County or All State. Coach Reeves had us doing full contact on the first day and cut players on the spot if they missed a tackle, fumbled the ball, or didn’t run the play correctly. After the first day Reeves had his team. I wasn’t sure if was a good thing or not, but I survived and made it”. Ralph ran back kick offs and punts and saw spot duty at defensive back for the highly successful 2 year program and in 1974 at the end of his fourth semester Ralph left HVCC with degree in hand and some valuable life’s lessons in his hip pocket.

In 1975 Ralph introduced himself to the Saugerties sports community when he and a group of fellow Kingston athletes formed a football team that competed in the newly formed but unfortunately short lived SAA Touch Football League. The talented “Pier 7” football team led by Ralph Longendyke was too much for the Saugerties based teams and even the presence of Saugerties football great John Carnright in the Championship Game against Pier 7 wasn’t enough to overcome the slick passing game and tough defense of Ralph Longendyke and company. Pier 7 was a perennial dominant force in the SAA Touch Football League however the folding of the short lived league abruptly ended Pier 7’s hopes of further success on Saugerties turf.

By 1978 Ralph's athletic abilities and football prowess were well known in the Saugerties sports circuit. With the demise of the SAA touch football league and the formation of a football league in the Town of Ulster, Ralph was eagerly recruited by a newly formed Saugerties team sponsored by Anaconda Sports. To no ones surprise, the fledgling Saugerties team which included Saugerties football great and fellow Hall of Famer Rich Koegel at quarterback, was instantly viewed upon as the team to beat. With Ralph doing double duty at split end and defensive back and Koegel calling the plays at quarterback, it didn't quite seem fair. The Anaconda Sports team methodically went about its business blowing out the opposition en route to a first year championship in a league packed with very talented teams from Kingston and surrounding areas on both sides of the Hudson River. The Koegel to Longendyke connection dominated the Town of Ulster league for a few years however father time was beginning to take his toll and subsequently the retirement of the two football stars led to the inevitable disbanding of the Anaconda Sports football team. Although a chapter in Ralph Longendyke's athletic journey had ended, two things had become clear..Ralph Longendyke still had a lot of life left in him and Saugerties had plenty more sports opportunities to offer.

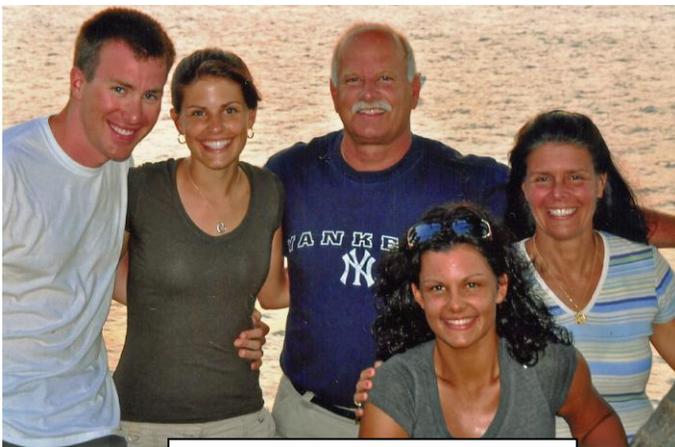
In 1980, Ralph further quenched his thirst for Saugerties sports and began participation in SAA softball. Still not totally entrenched in the Saugerties sports scene and still having a lot to learn as to who's who in Saugerties, Ralph accepted an invitation to play on an A league softball team in Saugerties. At that time Ralph was aware that the group of men that he would be playing with were very "skilled and competitive", however what he didn't know was that the invitation extended by Hall of Famer Ed "Bunny" Riozzi was to play with the notoriously competitive, perennially dominating, and almost mystical Glasco AC's. The Glasco AC's! Who would have ever thought that a kid from Kingston, who still had yet to move to Saugerties (let alone Glasco), would get an invite to play with arguably the best team ever to set foot on Keeley Field.

After surviving the customary solo tryout in the presence of the entire Glasco AC team and receiving the blessing of Hall of Fame icon Fred Davi, Ralph Longendyke became a Glasco AC. This truly was a testament to the athletic ability and personality that Ralph possessed. The boys from Glasco welcomed him with open arms and Ralph not only became a solid contributor for the team, he also casually went on to win the A division batting title and lead the Glasco AC's to yet another A league championship in his first year on the team. For 5 years Ralph contributed solidly to the success of the Glasco AC's as their everyday centerfielder and developed a reputation as one of the best all around players in the league. Ralph recollects, "When we won a game, which was usually the case, it never seemed to be good enough to simply win. If you won by 10 runs, it should have been 15, if there were errors made, you heard about it. I've never played with a group of guys that were so driven to excel. But I guess that's what made the Glasco AC's so special".



In his last year as a Glasco AC, Ralph developed an itch to bring his game to a new level and began experimenting as a pitcher. Having to wait for his opportunity in the shadow of fellow Hall of Famer and pitching great Percy Lasher, Ralph was unable to scratch this itch as a Glasco AC. Still young and fully capable, Ralph made the tough decision to switch teams in order to get mound time and therefore in 1986 he left the AC's to play with Greco Motors. That year, the Glasco AC's played Greco Motors for the A Division Championship. In the final game, Ralph lost a 1-0 decision to his former team, however if one were to ask anyone on that '86 Glasco team, they'd surely assert that Ralph got lucky and they should have beat him by more.

After short stays with Greco Motors and Modjeska Signs, Ralph went on to play SAA Softball with Sawyer Motors of the “B” Division. In 1987 Ralph was named recipient of the SAA “Lareau Award” for sportsmanship and contribution to his team and the league and from 1994 right up to the current day (16 years), Ralph has pitched for the Siracusano squad, leading them to numerous B Division championships. Over the 25 years as a hurler, Ralph developed into a crafty pitcher keeping batters off stride by changing speeds, hitting spots, and throwing strikes only when absolutely necessary. Ralph’s ability as a softball pitcher was so good that although a “B” team, Ralph’s Sawyer Motors squad competed head to head with any of the “A” Division teams when interleague play was in effect and no matter whom the opponent was, the Sawyer Motors boys knew they would always be in the game because of Ralph’s pitching ability. Still possessing much of the athletic speed he was blessed with, Ralph thrived as a heads up, slick fielding pitcher amply capable of defending the bunt and always knowing “where the play is”. Ralph’s performance on the softball field can be best described as “gritty” because of the intensity that he competes with. However along with this grittiness comes a skills set and longevity that most amateurs could only dream of and combining that with Ralph’s likeable personality, great sportsmanship and passion for the game, Ralph Longendyke stands in a category of his own.



Ralph and Family

During the 25 years that Ralph has honed his pitching skills, he also got pretty good at being a husband, father, and family man. As a devoted son he credits his mother, Alberta, and his father the late Ralph D. Longendyke for the strong family bond existing in the Longendyke family as well as the values he lives by day to day. Ralph’s dad, who passed away in 2001, is also a Saugerties Sports Hall of Famer and Ralph cites him as the most inspirational person in his life. “He taught me how to ride a bike, hunt, fish, play ball, and most importantly to be a good sport”.

The late Ralph D. Longendyke, inducted in 1984, excelled in baseball and soccer at SHS, was an original Dutchman, and a talented bowler, registering a 300 game in 1967. Ralph Jr. is elated and honored to be inducted along side of his beloved dad.

Ralph will proudly admit that although he has had some great moments and memories in sports, his biggest thrill is still and will always be watching his two daughters, Nicole and Sarah, excel in sports. Nicole, Ralph’s oldest, played varsity soccer and softball and in 2001 was class Valedictorian as well as SHS Athlete of the Year. Not to be outdone, Ralph’s younger daughter Sarah played 3 varsity sports (volleyball, basketball and softball) and in her senior year was recognized as a Section IX All Star in volleyball.

It would be remiss not to also recognize Ralph S. Longendyke’s commitment and service to the Saugerties sports community. For 10 years, by the side of his wife JoAnn, Ralph devoted countless hours to the Saugerties High School Athletic Booster Club. Together Ralph and JoAnn, recruited and managed volunteers, ran bake sales, sold hot dogs, and selflessly sacrificed their time raising funds for the Saugerties High School sports programs and sports scholarships. Annually, Ralph’s efforts would raise \$25,000-\$30,000 to aid SHS athletes. Ralph’s participation with the Saugerties High School Athletic Booster Club will be sorely missed and the sports community is very grateful for his unwavering dedication to the development of Saugerties High School sports and its athletes.

Outside of his family, Ralph credits two high school coaches as being an inspiration to him. His grammar school coach, Joe Defino, who taught him that his body is a “temple” and to take care of it, made a big impact on Ralph at an early age and he always followed Coach Defino’s advice. The fact that Ralph still competes athletically at the age of 56 gives credence to the words of wisdom passed on by the legendary Coach Defino. Ralph also credits Tony Badalato, his high school football coach for teaching him to “play with passion”. As is apparent by the successes that he has achieved throughout his sports journey and the way he approaches his sports, it’s evident that Ralph Longendyke wouldn’t have it any other way. Congratulations to Ralph S. Longendyke for this well deserved honor. He has truly earned the privilege of induction into the Saugerties Sports Hall of Fame.