

Coaches, Contributors & Teams in the Hall of Fame

Alvah Crocker, Benefactor

Erkki Koutonen, Coach

Marco Landon, Coach

Doug Grutchfield, Coach

Tony Alario, Coach

Ed Gastonguay, Coach

Ray Cosenza, Coach

Mark Ambrose, Coach

Loring Stevenson, Contributor

Fred Sullivan, Contributor

Dr. Edward Adams, Contributor

Stephen V. LeBlanc, Contributor

Ralph Howard, Contributor

John Cordio, Contributor

Dr. Paul Cochrane, Contributor

Don Woods, Contributor

1926 Basketball Team

1989 Girls X-Country Team

1924 Football Team

2000 Football Team

2004 Girls Softball Team

1977 Boys Basketball Team

1972 Football Team

1933 Football Team

1990 Girls Basketball Team

1960 Cross Country Team



Left to right -- First row: L. Laakso, R. Orava, co-captains: T. Kandianis and D. LeBlanc, W. Matesowicz, M. Maldari, J. Matson; Second row: L. Drury, D. Croucher, R. Legros, E. Maki, A. Michaelides, E. Lehto; Third row: R. Caron, L. Amburgey, J. Russo, B. Verge, R. Kinnunen, C. Genzy, J. Leblanc; Fourth row: V. Erickson, J. McWhinney, L. Stout, R. Bruerton, J. Eskola, C. Buchanan; Coach Koutonen.

Over the course of the last decade and a half or thereabouts, the Fitchburg High School Athletic Hall of Fame has honored the champions who have worn the Famous Red and Gray to its absolute fullest, bringing glory to our ol' Alma Mater. We've honored national champions and individual champions, Turkey Day champions and Sectional Tournament, popularly yet erroneously known as District, champions. And we've honored a few Super Bowl champions, too.

Today, alongside the 1991 football team that ushered in a Golden Age on the gridiron, we honor one of our state champions, a team that absolutely decimated the competition in that halcyon year of 1960, with enshrinement coming on the exact 57th Anniversary of their feat: that year's boys' cross country team, the second one to ever compete, set an incredible standard that fifty-plus FHS teams have tried to emulate, but have never duplicated in full.

While today's FHS harriers compete on the trails at Cogshall Park, back in the early days of cross country the Raiders utilized a unique course designed by former Olympian and First Class FHS Hall of Famer Erkki Koutonen, a Fitchburg High graduate from the Class of 1945: the course started behind the old Burbank Hospital's Burbank School of Nursing, now known as The Highlands, and wound through the Audubon Society trails. If you look at Google Maps of the area to the immediate left of the Highlands, you can see the trail starting next to a pair of tennis courts headed into the old Crocker lands; scrolling up, you can see the contour of the course through the trees as it winds toward Crocker Elementary School.

And in order to prepare for their meets, Koutonen devised some of the same strategies he learned at the University of Michigan: he'd have his runners do distance running one day, then repeated 440s, in other words, the length of the old cinder track at Crocker Field, doing so several times around, the second day. Back to distance training on day three, then repeated 880s, twice around, on day four. It was a method that worked, a methodology that propelled Fitchburg High School runners leaps and bounds above the rest.

Thanks to that training, the record in 1960, as the old saying goes, speaks for itself: Undefeated for the second consecutive season, winning all seven dual meets against Lunenburg, Notre Dame of South Street and Lawrence Academy (a tri-meet), Narragansett, Shrewsbury, Lawrence Academy a second time (the Spartans did better the second time around, but still no match for our Red Raider harriers), and the old Assumption Prep. It should also be noted that in three of those meets, the Red and Gray posted cross country ultimate lows of 15, as the low score always wins in this sport. FHS posted a 16 against LA the second time (to Lawrence's 49), and an 18 to Narragansett. The closest race? A five-point, 25-30 win over the Colonials, setting up an incredible rivalry in track between the two schools that lasts to this day.

But that's not all, friends: the Wachusett Invitational, one of the keystone events in Central Massachusetts every October, found its Class A title captured by Koutonen's charges, the top school out of the eighteen that ran over Holden's hills and dales that day. Two weeks later, the Red Raiders made the short drive from Academy Street to Marshall Park for the Lunenburg Invitational. The Blue Knights invited the Red Raiders and five other teams to compete. To no one's surprise, Fitchburg destroyed the field, posting a 19 in this event. 19! Let's put it this way, gang: in seeing this score, it feels as if Fitchburg High School treated this like a dual meet! Three days later, Nov. 5th, 57 years ago today, the Red Raiders took to the trails of Franklin Park, the ancestral two-and-a-half-mile home of the state championship meet. Fitchburg found itself aligned in Class B alongside some powerhouses: Lawrence's Central Catholic, Melrose, Worcester South, and the 1959 state and New England champion in Lexington High School. Back in 1960, all the places of your top five finishers are added together in order to determine where you finish in the overall team scheme. And with twenty-four schools putting ten runners in, all vying for the top spots in a mass start, it's critical to get through the course quickly. Coach Koutonen put together a rather dynamic roster for the final event of that year: Third Class Hall of Famer Dennis LeBlanc (according to Koutonen, the most talented runner he ever coached), Bill Matesowicz, Dickie Caron, Tim Kandianis, Jimmy LeBlanc, Bradford Verge, Chester Gensey, Leon Drury, Ray Kinnune, and Earl Mackie.

Our resident historian noted in 2005 that LeBlanc, who would later run a sub-two-minute half-mile during the Junior-Senior Relay in May 1961, wearing sneakers, not cleats, had a nifty little rivalry going with Worcester South's David Fournier; the latter crossed the finish line in this meet first, doing so in a little less than 12:30, a fast two-and-a-half miles. Dennis crossed in sixth place, a little bit behind Fournier.

LeBlanc's finish started a chain reaction, so to speak. Soon after, Matesowicz and Caron finished 11th and 12th, respectively, putting three Red Raiders across the line. Koutonen did the math: Fitchburg was in good shape.

After Caron finished, Kandianis loped over in 19th, before LeBlanc came across in 27th overall.

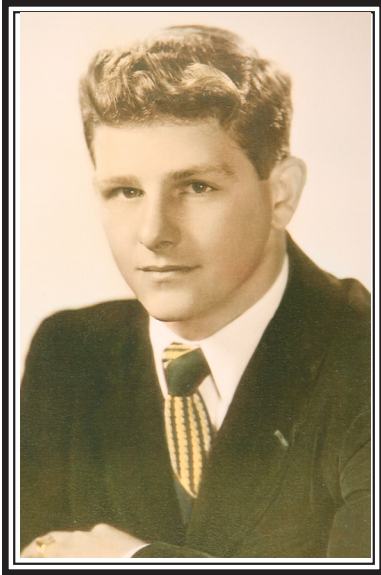
Five runners, all in the top thirty of the state Class B event; today, your top seven figures into your score. Points are allotted by where your runners finish, so let's do some quickie math here: $6+11+12+19+27=75$. Seventy-five points, in the state meet.

The next best? Lexington, with 144. Ladies and gents, Fitchburg had won in a virtual landslide!

In recent years, we've lost several members of this great team, Coach Ed Gastonguay tells us several families are representing their loved ones here today, but they are running alongside the Great Coach Koutonen in their eternal rest.

We now welcome the 1960 cross country team, at long last, to the Fitchburg High School Hall of Fame!

Arthur Capone - 1949



The late 1940s were a wonderful time to not only be a Red Raider, but also to be a Red Raider fan. And really, when you think about it, how could it not? First, World War II was over. Second, the new high school on Academy Street was still rather state-of-the-art, only a decade old; students of that time period didn't have to worry about outdated science labs or a teensy, tiny library. And third, the Red Raider teams under the legendary Marty McDonough were pretty darn good in those years, with all those running backs giving the fandom at Crocker Field plenty to cheer about. And when you have pretty darn good teams, you have some pretty darn good student-athletes to honor five to seven decades later.

Today, we honor and welcome another standout Fitchburg High School athlete from the late 40s to the Second Floor, a long-awaited induction for Arthur Lawrence Capone from the Class of 1949.

Athletes in the 1940's era weren't as large or as muscular as the kids we see today or in the last quarter-century playing football for Fitchburg High School; no, Art Capone, "Cap" or "L'il Art" to his contemporaries, tipped the scales at 150 pounds, but do take care to remember the words of a diminutive green Jedi: "Judge me by my size, do you?" Don't let the weight fool you, folks; Cap was just as good as the larger guys, with the heart of a lion: his caption in the 1949 Boulder reads, "He may be small, but oh my!"

That is possibly why McDonough, in the fall of 1947, utilized this junior just as much as he did the seniors in that deceptively good 5-2-3 season. Capone played a key role alongside several icons from the Class of '48 that we have previously inducted, such as Bucker Shea, Corky Ervin, Bob Duncan, Ray Ablondi, Joe Cushing, et al.; McDonough called on all of them pretty frequently, but in the game that truly matters, it was Cap getting his fill of the football alongside Bucker Shea. Early in the first quarter, with the Raiders setting up at the Blue Devil 1, Capone took the handoff and pounded his way into the end zone to cap off—no pun intended—a 65-yard drive to put FHS ahead early, and then he punched in the extra point! The Fitchburg Sentinel reported that with that, "the game was as good as over," and it was as LHS had no answer: the Red Raiders beat Leominster, 13-0, on Thanksgiving morning.

With those amazing seniors graduated, McDonough then turned to the Class of '49 for leadership, and boy did he get it: between Capone and his fellow Hall of Famers in Red Goguen and Bud Stevenson, along with a junior in Hall of Famer Jim Meredith, the Red and Gray would grind out numerous victories during Arthur Capone's senior season, the fall of 1948. That team went 7-2-1; Fitchburg's scores that year showed some hard-fought, low-scoring affairs, with the Red Raiders setting out to post the best record in FHS football since Amriott's stellar 1935 group which only lost to Brockton.

Through the first five weeks of the 1948 season, co-captain Capone and the Raiders sat at 2-2-1 thanks to wins over Drury and Brookline, not opponents you see in the present day, but took losses to local rivals in Clinton and Marlboro. The lone tie came in week five, as Fitchburg went up to Stone Field and played Walt Dubzinski, Sr's Gardner Wildcats to a 12-12 decision. As it turned out, it was the last time FHS would be disappointed in 1948.

The following week, with St. Bernard's making the drive across the city, Capone shined bright under a weakening late October sun: with the Raiders and Bernies locked in a 6-6 tie early in the fourth quarter, the Fitchburg defense had held the Blue and Gold. And with FHS forcing a punt, Capone, who played some of the game at quarterback instead of his usual fullback position, raced out to field the punt.

As it came to him at the Raider 40, the Fitchburg Front blocked, and blocked hard as Capone raced 60 yards to the house to give FHS an emphatic 13-6 comeback victory over their inter-city archrivals.

Two weeks later, with Cap still at quarterback, Fitchburg nipped the other Red Raiders of Athol, 14-12, at Crocker Field, as Capone and junior Charlie Bowen combined to punch in the game-winning score. Like against Leominster the year previous, Arthur snuck through the line from a yard out, but the set-up of the score is what old timers talk about: Cap had handed off to Bowen for a 10-yard gain after a little trickery coming deep within McDonough's playbook as Bowen tossed a nifty halfback option pass to Capone for a gain of 27 down to the Athol 11. Three weeks later, FHS beat Leominster, 13-7, behind another Art Capone TD to finish an amazing gridiron season. Capone took MVP honors for the Red Raiders, was Second team All-North County (the sportswriters don't always get it right) for quarterback, and also accepted, on behalf of the football team, the North Worcester County Sportswriters Association award for the outstanding season they had accomplished.

That winter, L'il Art laced up the basketball shoes to play for Hall of Famer John Oliva's Red and Gray cagers and was even named a captain in his only season inside the Brickyard, but Cap was truly looking forward to getting outside to play baseball for the third straight spring: McDonough had replaced Hall of Famer Loring Reed Stevenson, Sr. of the Class of 1915 as the head coach in 1946, and Arthur would captain the hardball squad as its catcher.

And he even hit lead-off! In a game against Marlboro, Capone socked five hits in as many times at bat for the Academy Street Crew, en route to a 4-2 early-season win over the Panthers. Then, in a re-match against Athol late in the year, "Little Art Capone" went to the plate four times and registered one hit, but he also drove in four of FHS's nine runs that day in a 9-6 victory.

After graduation, Arthur found himself drafted into the Marine Corps, stationed at Quantico, Virginia, where he made the post's baseball team. There, he played alongside two future Cleveland Indians in Hal Naragon and Glenn Harshbarger—that name may sound familiar to those who pay attention to Fitchburg politics, as Art's son Glenn, a 1990's school committee member who helped build our new high school, was named after the Tribe twirler.

Art and his dear wife, the former Becky Smith of the Class of 1950, the majorette who fell for the football player, legacy continued into the new millennium, as his granddaughters all attended Fitchburg High School, and like Grandpa Art, Hannah Capone from the Class of 2012 played four different sports in every season for the Famous Red and Gray; sisters Abby from the Class of 2010 and Emily from the Class of 2009 were both four-year softballers, too.

Truly, Art Capone is one of the greats in FHS lore, and today we honor him posthumously by welcoming him to the Hall of Fame!

Peter Stephens - 1958



In the fall of 1955, Coach Ed Sullivan offered the young man in front of him a little grimace. He had expected this particular youngster, a sophomore, to come out for the Fitchburg High football team that year. This kid had been a workhorse during his freshman year, playing pretty much everywhere. Back in those days, Sully ran the old Notre Dame box formation, and so did the freshman squad. Needed a pass thrown? He'd do it, as the halfback. Hello, halfback option pass! Needed the ball run? Give it to the fearless freshman. Needed someone to block? This kid stepped right up and laid the opposing defender aside. The kid was a solid player, and he was counting on him. Hence...the grimace.

The nervous youngster calmly explained why he couldn't play for the Red and Gray that year: with dad retiring early from the work force due to illness, he had to step away from his studies on Academy Street in order to help support his family, but he finished his plea with a promise: he told Sullivan that he'd be back for his junior year. Sullivan nodded. The old ball coach understood, adding everything up in his mind, especially with the other names, like Congram and Conry, Kielty and Rostedt, coming back the following year. With this young man back in the fold, he thought, we could be successful indeed. Ninth class inductee Peter Stephens kept his promise, and returned to the gridiron in 1956 to continue an incredible three-sport interscholastic career for the Red Raiders.

While he was a star on that 1956 football team including a 10-of-22 passing morning against Leominster that November, he stood out in his senior year of 1957: and to be truthful, in sifting through the information about that campaign it's hard to pick a starting point, because there is just so much that he did to help Fitchburg High succeed after a slow start that year. For example, with the Red Raiders pinned at their own 3-yard line against Hudson, Stephens rolled and found fellow Hall of Famer Dick Boutwell for a 97-yard touchdown pass, a play that sixty years later remains the longest touchdown pass in school history.

But that's not all: Against crosstown rival St. Bernard's, Stephens found himself front and center, as the Bernardians just couldn't stop No. 25. Pete carried eight consecutive times, one of which for a 25-yard pickup. He booted three extra points, too! Against Athol, same thing: Pete Stephens was slippery against the other Red Raiders, and whenever Fitchburg got into the end zone, at least five times that afternoon, he'd boot home the extra point for good measure.

And let's not forget his amazing day against Leominster that year, folks, as the Red Raiders beat the favored Blue Devils, 20-14, for our first win over "those guys" in five years. Our esteemed historian has noted several times in past induction ceremonies, the Red and Gray arrived at Doyle Field on a warm November morning. Stephens and Kenny Rostedt, with the help of big Roger Kielty up front, ran roughshod against our archrivals, having an

easy time against Charlie Broderick's Leominster defense.

Now remember: Fitchburg started 0-3 with losses to Notre Dame at the Bowl, a 13-0 loss to Nashua, and an eight-point loss to Marlboro. After that, with the play of Stephens, the third-leading scorer in the city that fall, between all the scorers of Fitchburg, Notre Dame, and St. Bernard's, and a few other Raider greats like Buzzy Congram, Fitchburg High School did not lose another game in 1957, a solid turnaround from the 2-5 campaign of 1956.

He wasn't a bad cager for John Oliva's Red and Gray, either. During his junior year, Pete rotated between the starting lineup and the important first man off the bench on a team that went 14-1 in the regular season, coming up with big wins over Notre Dame and St. Bernard's, as well as a 10-point revenge win over Leominster at the Brickyard after losing heavily, 74-48, at the Gallagher Building for our only regular-season loss, and 18-4 overall. He played a definitive role alongside Congram, Boutwell, and Dave King, all Hall of Famers in their own right, en route to the Northern Worcester County Championship, as well as their first invitation to the Western Mass. Tourney for the first time in a decade. Stephens was everywhere, folks, sniping the cylinder or grabbing the errant shot. The next year, Stephens consistently hit double digits for the King-less Red Raiders.

On the diamond, he was no slouch, either. During his junior year under Dominic Guazzo, Pete hit .312, now this is with wood bats, not with the dink-and-donk BBCOR or aluminum the kids play with nowadays, while manning the hot corner. Fitchburg went 11-3, second place to 12-2 Gardner. The Wildcats two losses? They came against Pete Stephens and our very own Red and Gray.

Oh, and did we forget to mention that the year off didn't hamper his ability to graduate on time in 1958? Nope. Pete completed ALL of his work, and found the time to excel in three sports on Academy Street.

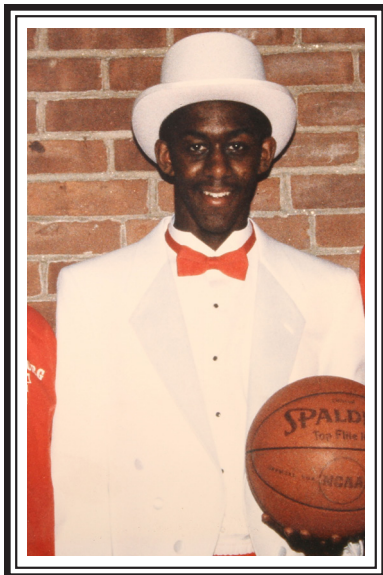
After one year at Fitchburg State, where he played soccer, pulling a reverse Tony Meola: with his place-kicking experience at FHS, Pete used those skills as he played on the back line for the Falcons, helping the team record seven clean sheets en route to not only the New England Teacher's College Athletic Conference title, but also to the NAIA national title game at Slippery Rock, he transferred to Keene State to play soccer, basketball, he walked on, and baseball, keeping things rolling. In addition, during that freshman year at FSC, he served as a scout assistant to Coach Sullivan, all while coaching the B.F. Brown team, which, by the way, featured a certain guy named Muir and a certain guy named Jerszyk, in case you didn't know.

But his life's work was just beginning: he started teaching at the Ashburnham Street and Reingold schools shortly after graduation from Keene. His life in education didn't end there, as he became principal of Memorial, helping students reach their academic and athletic goals.

Even after retiring from the Fitchburg Public School system, he still serves our children: he is a member of our city School Committee, and serves on the Crocker Field Restoration Committee and our Alumni Association.

And now, with wife Claudia and his three greatest personal achievements, Jeffrey, Rebecca, and Melissa, beside him, we welcome Pete to the Second Floor and the FHS Hall of Fame.

Norbert Pickett - 1987



In 1988, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association's Tournament Management Committee followed the National Federation's directive regarding the newest instrument in basketball scoring, the 3-point shot. It had come into the wider basketball lexicon when the NBA adopted it in 1979, and the NCAA embraced it, Christian Laettner made his living thanks to one particular instance, by 1986. By the time the MIAA got on board with it, a rather prolific scorer for Fitchburg High School, for quite a few years, its top scorer in 80-plus years of its history, had already graduated, his interscholastic career completed.

Even though he is now twice-removed from the scoring record, Ninth Class inductee Norbert Pickett is undoubtedly considered one of the greatest Red Raider cagers if not of all-time, then definitely he's one of the greatest from the pre-3-point era.

By the time Pickett entered FHS in the fall of 1983, he was already a prodigious scorer and ball-handler for Mike Baltier down the street at B.F. Brown. That was good, as the Red and Gray during their peak in the 1980's didn't just rebuild: no, they simply re-loaded and attacked the competition in the Mid-Wach night in and night out, year in and year out. Now remember folks, Norbert's time in the old bandbox on Academy and Elm was plagued by budget restraints, Proposition 2 1/2, and if it wasn't for Baltier and Al Pierce and a host of other local coaches, there wouldn't have been a junior high league in north Central Mass. at all. With their time and effort, B.F. Brown and Memorial youngsters continued learning the fabled Grutchfield Way. And under Baltier, Norbert certainly learned.

He would have to wait to truly assert his dominance on the hardwood: FHS had come off its special 1982-83 basketball team which claimed Doug Grutchfield's third Central Mass. title, the team which went 20-2 and could have gone on to the state tournament had there been one, another casualty of Prop. 2 1/2. During his freshman year, with returning veterans like David Marshall, Danny Barry, and Hall of Famer Paul DiGeronimo on the squad, young Norbert would have a cup of coffee with the varsity team which went 18-1, as they say, biding his time.

His sophomore year was another biding-his-time year, although he got off the bench a little more along with freshman Derrick Bennett at point guard. FHS won Central Mass. in '85 with Hall of Famer Mike Connolly at the helm, and Barry, Richie Gilchrest, Rich "Spike" Carlson, Harvey Earley, and HOFer Scott Wiirtanen among the key contributors that near-state title year, but Norbert, thanks to some late-night shooting in the Brickyard (he freely admits he had a key to the building), was about to become the legend. Starting his junior season, Norbert Pickett just took over. He scored, and then he scored some

more with an absolutely sick jumper from anywhere in the quarter court. He even rebounded, too, getting those precious second-chance opportunities and putting them back—even if the opposition put two or three guys on him. That then opened the door for his teammates to score. Still, Norbert averaged, *averaged*, 34 percent from the floor as a Red Raider.

And he even did his thing at the line: Norbert shot upward of 95 percent from the charity stripe. Foul at your own risk? Foul at your own risk.

But he may have saved his greatest feats for his senior year, where he scored 757 points and was joined alongside Hall of Famer Mark Pierce, and the Bennett boys in Derrick and Darren. In that 1986-87 year, the Red Raiders were good; in fact, they were really good. FHS posted seven 80-plus-point games that year, including one against eventual Central Mass. champion Wachusett where Norbert would score 46, and a pair of 100-point efforts against Notre Dame of South Street and St. Peter-Marian. It was during the game against SPM, the last game of the regular season, where Pickett produced a still-school record, single game-high 61 points, the Guardians just had absolutely no answer for Norbert that night.

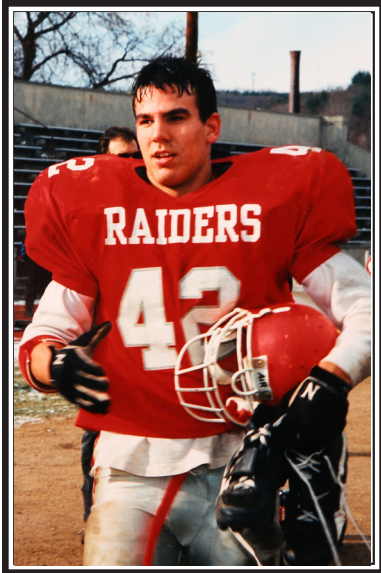
Oh, and did we mention that was when Fitchburg High played in quarter increments instead of halves? Yeah, about that, on his 61-point night, Norbert only played in three of the four quarters, coming out of the game with about 80-someodd seconds left in the third. An amazing feat, ladies and gents, one immortalized forever as Doug Grutchfield and assistant coach John Cordio posed with Norbert for a picture that now sits in the case across from the Second Floor Hall of Fame wall.

During that 1986-87 year, Norbert fielded 35 Division 1 offers; there were many days that letters from college programs sat on Grutchfield's desk, stacked like cordwood for Norbert to filter through. Of them all, he stayed relatively close to home and picked Boston University: according to the BU Alumni Magazine, he holds multiple state and regional records, scoring, most points in a season, and shooting percentage with points over 60. After graduating from Commonwealth Avenue, Norbert ran the marketing departments for the Philadelphia Eagles, the Baltimore Ravens, the Washington Wizards, was the casting director for the Jimmy Kimmel Live! show, as well as various other projects.

Now, let's return to that opening thought, folks: in the end, Norbert scored 1,301 points as a Red Raider, again, doing it without a 3-point line to aid him. With his ability to hit from anywhere, and with opposition in his face, the question needs to be asked: if Norbert had the 3-point line on his side, how many points would he have ended with when his career came to its conclusion? It's a question that long-time fans of the Red and Gray, and even his teammates, one of which has estimated that he would have scored upward of 2,000, have always asked. We'll never know.

In 2015, the New England Basketball Hall of Fame came calling for him along with his junior high coach in Mike Baltier, and he joined numerous Fitchburg legends in that esteemed group. Now living the bi-coastal life as he splits time between Laguna Beach, California and our nation's capital, Norbert Pickett is finally where he belongs as the third member of the Class of 1987 in the Fitchburg High School Hall of Fame.

Chris Roy - 1997



Going to Fitchburg High School during the mid-1990s, this typist can readily say we children of the late 1970s and early 1980s were a rather spoiled bunch. Sure, our science labs weren't necessarily the greatest, but we had a rather competitive, that's putting it mildly, folks, football team year-in and year-out that put its success together thanks to not only the play of a rather bulky line corps (see also: Keith Leavitt), but also of whichever dangerous twosome Hall of Fame head football coach Ray Cosenza had standing behind not only the line, but any number of standout quarterbacks.

When the Hall of Fame backfield twosome of Zack McCall and Bobby Williams graduated in June 1993, Cosenza turned to Hall of Famer Ryan Keenan and Lawrence Yarbrough to handle a majority of the ball-carrying duties for the Red and Gray the next two seasons, behind the solid muscle of Mike Beaulac and Greg Graham, respectively, as the fullbacks. And while they were a successful set of pairings, the next set were waiting in the wings, so to speak, ready to lay the smack down on Central Mass. That pairing was, of course, Seventh Class inductee Ricky Morales, and Ninth Class inductee Chris Roy.

Simply put, Cosenza could have Hall of Famer Todd Steffanides or Devin Gates hand the ball off to either of these two outstanding athletes, and they'd run for TDs a-plenty, and you can bet your bottom dollar they did. And with some pretty good meat up front in the form of the Schneiders, Roys, Sallilas, and Leavitts of the world, paydirt was only a gargantuan hole away.

Usually in the I-formation, the fullback generally handles the secondary block: he goes through the line and pops a linebacker, giving the tailback extra milliseconds in order to do his thing and break away. But not in the intense, Cosenza-fueled 90's, where the fullback could also do some damage with the ball in his hands. Chris Roy was no exception, folks, especially in those years of 1995 and 1996 en route to S&E and T&G All-Star nods in both. As a junior, the lunch pail-like Roy rushed for 1,235 yards and scored 15 TDs for the Red Raiders, only topped by 1,248 yards rushing, 300 yards receiving and 20 TDs during his senior campaign, where he was a captain.

Several games stand out in not only Roy's memory, but that of those who watched and cheered for him. For instance, his junior year of 1995 saw him post an amazing 150-yard, three-TD performance on the road at North Middlesex, and remember, gang, the Patriots back then were simply unbeatable when they played at the tomb that is John E. Young Memorial Field. For thirty-seven consecutive home games, Sandy Ruggles' teams were tops. No one seemed to inform Chris Roy of that fact! Behind Roy's strength, Fitchburg beat NM, 20-14, on that cold November night in Townsend.

But good ol' No. 42 may have saved his best gridiron performance for his penultimate game in Fitchburg Red. You fast forward a little more than a year to Crocker Field, with the Blue Devils in town, and the Raiders of this era always saved their best for Leominster. Against LHS, Roy practically punched it in the mouth as he rushed for 198 yards on 19 carries, scoring a pair of touchdowns. But that's not all: defensively, Roy recorded 12 tackles, and even picked off the late Nico Mazzaferro, the Leominster quarterback that year, to cap off a 28-19 win over those guys, the sixth consecutive season with a win over LHS.

Then came Milford, for the second time in the year, at snowy WPI for the Central Mass. title. The two teams had met back in week three. Fitchburg was fresh off a 19-19 draw with New Bedford, and the Scarlet Hawks had given FHS fits in this one, with the Raiders prevailing, 18-13, in a well-fought battle.

That's not what happened on Worcester's Boynton Hill in December 1996, as Roy and the Raiders torched Milford that afternoon, 50-0. This typist remembers sitting at a table in the Eastwood Club, celebrating his grandfather's birthday with Dave Clark's twangy voice coming through his headphones as he announced Chris Roy touchdown after Chris Roy touchdown, to the tune of 133 yards on eight, yup, eight, carries, along with a punt returned for a touchdown, too. And Ricky, of course, did damage. Milfordites to this day praise that offensive line of the 10-1-1 Super Bowl champion Raiders, but they should reserve an equal amount of praise to Chris Roy for his magnificent effort, too.

Of course, Roy was also a pretty darn good baseball player for Cosenza, too. A four-year player at the old Crocker Field diamond, Roy hit the tar out of the ball, his junior year of 1996 saw him swing a mighty stick to the tune of .415, earning him a spot in the Mid-Wach top ten for hitting. He would duplicate that in his senior year, also as a captain, and grab S&E All-Star nods for baseball in both, too.

After graduation, Chris took part in the North/South Shriner's All-Star football game, then went to Springfield College alongside fellow Hall of Famer Matt Sallila, where the two of them played for Coach Mike DeLong.

Chris is now married to the former Katherine Lindquist and lives in Leominster with their daughter Ashlynn.

Congrats on your achievements, Chris, and welcome to the Fitchburg High Hall of Fame!

Joe Costa - 1974



In the two-plus decades after the United States' 1-0 win over England in the 1950 FIFA World Cup in Belo Horizonte, soccer had yet to take as firm a hold on this country as it now has today. Of course, there's good reason for this: The Yanks hadn't appeared in a World Cup since Brazil, and the North American Soccer League was only a few years old; Pele hadn't even arrived on Randall's Island to join the pre-eminent club in the league, the New York Cosmos. To many, the sport of soccer was something to sign the little ones up for until they were old enough for hearty gladiator football, or the National Pastime. To inductee Giuseppe "Joe" Costa, though, soccer, world football, was life.

His life earned him induction into our Hall of Fame today. As we start this story, you have to remember something here: when Joe came to Fitchburg in 1970, Fitchburg High School didn't have a boys' soccer team. No. If you were male and you wanted to play sports at FHS in the fall, you could do one of two things: you go out to Crocker Field and play football for the legendary Marco Landon, or go run the hills behind Burbank Hospital for the legendary Erkki Koutonen. Those were your choices.

Costa didn't care for those choices. Instead, he and a few other young men petitioned fellow inductee Stanley Goode and then-AD Jack Conway to start a soccer team. Under the tutelage of Dick Lavers and wearing long-sleeved jerseys with a big letterman's F over the left breast, Costa, then a sophomore, and the Red and Gray took the pitch for the first time in 1971. Suffice it to say, Fitchburg High didn't overwhelm anyone in its initial foray in what Costa would call *calcio* in his native tongue: the Red Raiders went 1-9 in their first campaign and were outscored 42-7, but Costa made his presence known in the center of the park as he scored five goals, his powerful left foot and bulging quadriceps an asset for the future.

In his junior year, 1972, there was a little bit of improvement for the Red Raiders as the kickers went 3-7-1 overall, with wins over Wachusett (4-3) and two over Groton (4-2, 4-0) and the lone tie coming in a nil-nil draw with Hudson in the last game of the season: Fitchburg managed to cut the goals allowed down to 36 and upped its own goal total to 15, with Joe Costa—called by local soccer legend Frank Worthley as a brilliant set-up man and ball handler—in the thick of things for the Red and Gray. And when Joe was on the ball and you were the opponent, you needed to keep an eye on his feet—and sometimes, keeping an eye on his feet didn't help matters much, defensively.

At the time, there wasn't a full All-Star team in any of the local papers, unlike the ones put together for football and basketball; of course, the sport was in its interscholastic infancy in our area. After Joe's junior year concluded, the Fitchburg Sentinel's Ken Albridge picked up his pen and wrote: "If there was an All-Star team chosen, it would have to include Joe Costa." In his senior year, there was a change in the head coaching duties as sandy-haired Peter Ford

took over for Coach Lavers; in addition, Seventh Class inductee Mike Gallo joined the team as a sophomore. And not only that, Joe's skill on the ball continued to grow: in one match against Wachusett, and as another Ninth Class inductee is wont to say, "They're not bad at soccer!", Joe Costa scored not one, not two, not three, and not even four goals. No, he scored FIVE. Yeah, there's no scoring in football. Sure. Sure. Tell Joe Costa that!

But the highlight of that senior year wasn't that Coach Landon hoped Joe would kick field goals on Saturday afternoons, Conway would turn that request down, as no athlete could play two contact sports in the same season: it came on the pitch against Emile Johnson's Blue Devils of Leominster High School, a team which came into the match unbeaten. And we nearly did beat them, by gum!

Never before had Fitchburg scored against Leominster in this sport, LHS beat FHS, 5-0 and 3-0, in the fall of 1972, but in this match at Crocker Field, Joe made that Blue Devil XI think twice about underestimating the young kickers from Academy Street. Simply put, FHS had scored first, shellshocking the Blue and White. But the lads of Coach Johnson, who we must credit for writing to our committee and supporting Joe's nomination; "Joe always encouraged his teammates," Johnson wrote, "and appeared to be a man amongst boys because of his great skills and knowledge of the game.", recovered and leveled the match. At the full time whistle, there was no shame on either bench, and the Red Raiders earned that point from a solid 1-1 draw.

Joe's efforts on the football pitch for Fitchburg High School earned him a four-year ride to the University of Maine at Orono, where he would become the first freshman to start on the Black Bears squad. He also earned four letters for UMaine, was All-Yankee Conference in his junior and senior years in 1977 and 1978, and was Team MVP and an All-American in his senior year. We'd say that's pretty darn good!

After graduating from UMaine, Joe became the first girls' soccer coach down the road at Nashoba, before assisting the legendary Marty Aristegui when he became the Chieftains' boys' soccer coach. He kept his toes on the ball as he played some amateur soccer in Hudson, Springfield, and Worcester. He also had the opportunity to play second-division *calcio* in Italy, where Catania welcomed him to the Serie B squad.

Now married to the former Athena Panagiotes, Joe Costa's soccer career came to a close a while back; his daughter, Alexa, was a pretty good striker over at St. Bernard's a few years back. Will FHS see another footballer like him again? We're waiting. Today, we honor him for an illustrious FHS career by warmly welcoming the first great soccer player in school history to the Hall of Fame.

Brandy Green - 2000



If one looks up “pioneer” in the dictionary, they will find that the second definition says, “One who is first or among the earliest in any field of inquiry, enterprise, or progress.” When one thinks of Fitchburg High track and field and mentions Ninth Class inductee Brandy Green and the pole vault in the same sentence, it isn’t difficult to let a wistful smile traipse across one’s lips and a nod when one realizes that yes, she can be considered as a pioneer of that particular discipline.

Much in the same way that fellow Hall of Famers Kathy Lawler and Deb Dion, both from the First Hall of Fame Class in 2001, are considered pioneers of women’s sports at FHS, Green, a member of the FHS Class of 2000, is certainly and incontrovertibly one of the first great pole vaulters of the feminine gender in our area: you see, folks, while pole vaulting had been around for the boys during spring track,

it wasn’t accepted that girls performed in that event, much in the same way girls weren’t allowed to do the triple jump or weren’t allowed to run distance events for quite some time, it was thought the young ladies would get hurt while performing the vault; a bunch of chauvinistic, anti-Title IX B.S., until the late 1990s, when Green’s sophomore year rolled around.

Once she picked up the pole and ran down the runway, she took to mastering it and made the event her own. And at one point in her interscholastic career, Brandy Green took her pole to the All-New England meet, where she ended up finishing third overall. That’s not bad for a young woman from Fitchburg!

But not only did Green, an accomplished gymnast-turned-track star; “(Gymnastics) transformed naturally to most of her events,” wrote FHS Hall of Famer Shifty LeBlanc when we asked him about her training; fellow inductee Chris Woods noted that she didn’t have a set pattern as she approached her events, either, instead picking a spot and nailing it: “At the state meet I remember going to her in the pole vault competition and asking her if I could help her with her steps. She said, ‘What do you mean by steps?’ Great coaching by me!”, snag the school’s outdoor track pole vault record of 10-foot-6, which remained in place until 2007, when Chrissy Silvar beat it by an inch. She was also a rather prodigious sprinter and hurdler. As we noted in our last cycle, if there’s anything we here at FHS do correctly without snide comments from the peanut gallery is produce gifted sprinters, and Green is definitely one of them.

During her senior year, Green owned the hurdles, breaking many of the records set by fellow Hall of Famer—and current FHS boys’ track coach, Cindy (Coleman) Donelan,

including the 50-meter (7.3 seconds, Central Mass Indoor Invitational) and 55-meter hurdles (8.48 at the Indoor Class C meet), which are both school records to this day, as well as the meet record for the Central Mass. State qualifying meet in the 100-meter hurdles (15.3 seconds) for outdoor track. She had also won that event in her junior year, after placing third in it her sophomore year.

During the Class A meet her senior year, she took first in both the pole vault and the 100-meter hurdles. Along with Class A, she was the All-League and All-District E champion in the hurdles. During the indoor track pentathlon, she finished fourth overall. She also owns the indoor track long jump record to this day!

Current FHS girls' track coach Sara Lamey, the former Sara DiPilato, now an FHS art teacher who married a Fitchburg boy, was a contemporary of Green's while she competed for her dad, the immortal Nick DiPilato, at track rival Shrewsbury; Coach Lamey notes Brandy had a solid, intense rivalry with her Colonial teammate Ingrid Gustafson in both the pole vault and the 100 hurdles during their respective meets. "It was a terrific introduction for women's pole vault watching the two of them go back and forth," she said.

But of course, it's not just about big meet performances: Green performed in the dual meets, as well. Shifty LeBlanc, who coached Green as well as a slew of other incredible runners, noted she would choose two field events and two running events, the usual maximum, as meets can be so helter-skelter with timing, and you can't miss event registration, and win all of them.

Along with hurdling and the pole vault, Green performed in the three jumping events, high, triple, and long, as well as the shot put and discus. An incredibly well-rounded track performer.

"It was certainly nice as a coach," LeBlanc wrote in regards to Green's flexibility in her eventing, "knowing that you could count on 20 points in your favor during every dual meet." Brandy Green did that a lot!

After graduation, part of the last class to leave the dear 64-year-old Academy Street building, Green matriculated at UMass-Amherst, where she continued to wow on the track. As a junior at State U, she set the pole vault record for the Minutemen, 12 feet, which remained in place until 2008; as of this writing, she is currently third all-time in that event. She also competed in the hurdles for three years, doing so on a partial scholarship.

Today, Brandy takes her rightful place among the immortals in Red Raider athletic lore as a member of the Fitchburg High School Hall of Fame!

Ryan Howe - 2007



When Proposition 2 1/2 passed at the ballot box in 1980 and went into effect in 1982, Fitchburg High athletics faced, and weathered, the storm, much like every other city and town in the Commonwealth. It meant there would be some belt-tightening, and some programs and services would be cut as part of this cost-saving measure. As part of it, FHS cut its middle school basketball programs, its boys' soccer program, its ice hockey team, and even had to settle for the 1982-83 Central Mass. championship in boys' basketball, since there wasn't a state tournament that year (and it still hurts Paper City old timers to think what could have been).

As noted elsewhere in the pages of this booklet, middle school basketball was miraculously saved. The boys' soccer team returned under the direction of Marty Aristegui a few years later. The state tournament for basketball returned; our 1984-85 team made it all the way to the state final, ultimately to fall to Brockton. But of all the cuts made, the ice hockey program, which began in the 1958-59 school year, didn't return right away, and it seemed shuttered for good, not until a pair of students from the mid-1990 years requested a meeting with AD Doug Grutchfield to ask that the team be reinstated. In short, it returned in the winter of 1993-94.

In those early years of this new era, FHS certainly took its lumps in Division 3, as the IceRaiders were high on energy, but outside of a couple of players like Greg Forrister and Brandon Nicholopoulos, short on serious goal-scoring talent to topple the Leominsters, the North Middlesexes, and the Oakmonts of the world. And this was the way it went, year-in, year-out, until the early 2000s rolled around. Enter Ninth Class, and first-year eligible, inductee Ryan Howe from the Fitchburg High Class of 2007.

Simply put, Howe's dynamic play on the ice coupled with his sheer size and speed represented Fitchburg's emergence in the local hockey scene, and according to longtime Red Raider hockey coach Steve Lowney, he was The Most Dominant Hockey Player In The Area, and that is in all four of Central Mass's Division 3 and 3A conferences, the Coughlin, Quinn, Roy, and Russell Conferences, folks, during his time at Fitchburg High School. "He was so feared that other coaches dedicated their entire game plan to shutting him down," the former Fitchburg State standout wrote. Nice try, other coaches, but it just wasn't enough. During Howe's senior season, he blasted home 34 goals, a school record and an area mark that no player in Central Massachusetts has matched in the last decade.

When he turned his tassel, he ended up as FHS's all-time leader in goals scored with 69,

a record he still holds, and total points with 119, currently second to future Hall of Famer Zack L'Ecuyer from the Class of 2008, who recorded a grand total of 123 points. To this day, Howe, and remember, hockey is the only sport he played, other than a cup of coffee with the golf team his freshman and sophomore years, is one of three players in this new era to record over one hundred total points on the ice for Fitchburg High.

Now, one would think such a prolific goal-scorer would be a forward, taking face-offs or playing on the wings. And sure, for his freshman and sophomore years, he did just that. But like we said, the dominance...he was so dominant that for his junior and senior years, Lowney and Co. asked him to play portions of those two seasons on defense, and let us repeat this very important piece of information, and imagine it coming across in a rather screechy voice: he still scored 34 goals even from the blue line, and he did so without a word of complaint, not an ounce of head-shaking.

And there were also spells where the score was so lopsided in favor of the Red and Gray, a turnaround from when the program resumed in 1993, that he sat for long stretches, and made sure he was on his feet to congratulate his teammates, because that's what a two-year captain does.

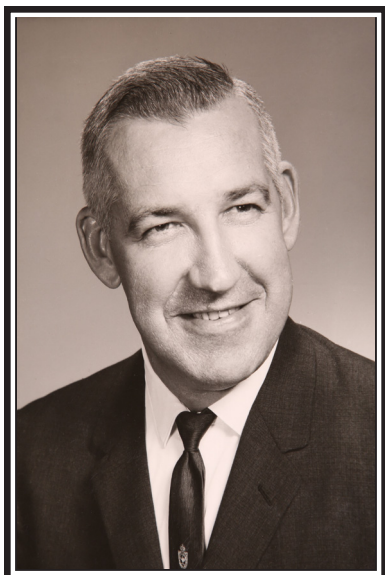
Consider that for a moment, gang: just how high would have Howe's totals gone had the Raiders not shown the sportsmanship toward its opponents and not reeled him in? Think about it: 80 goals? 90? 100? That sound you hear right now? That's back of the Wallace Civic Center nets weeping in eternal gratitude!

Howe's play helped lift FHS into the postseason several times, including an appearance in the Central Mass. Sectional Final as a junior. He captured S&E All-Star honors three times, T&G SuperTeam honors in 2006 and 2007, was a Coughlin Conference All-Star in those two years, a Central Mass. All-Star, and was the team MVP in both his junior and senior years. Oh, and did we forget to mention that after graduating from our beloved \$38 million building in North Fitchburg, he stayed close to home and played for The Dean Of Frozen Ponds, Dean Fuller, at Fitchburg State? Yep, and he averaged a point a game as a true, 18-year-old freshman, something pretty much unheard of, as Fuller, a retired FHS teacher, and the Falcons competed for ECAC Northeast and now-MASCAC crowns with players who were well into their 20s after playing juniors or prepping with private institutions.

For the last four years, Ryan has worked as a corrections officer for the Mass. DOC following a year as a dispatcher at 20 Elm Street, and nowadays he can be found playing men's league hockey or staying active in the gym.

We doff our hats, raise a glass, and smack our stick on the ice as we welcome Ryan Howe to the Second Floor, the first hockey player enshrined in the FHS Hall of Fame!

Stanley A. Goode - Contributor



Suffice it to say, Fitchburg High School and St. Bernard's Central Catholic have a rather interesting relationship. Bound and separated only by a little more than a mile between Academy and Harvard Streets prior to our new building's construction, FHS and STB have competed athletically and academically for students, per se: for instance, 1991 football team members David Souza and Tim Cannon were at St. Bernard's Elementary throughout the 80s together before deciding they had had enough of nuns and came to Fitchburg High instead in 1989, since 1920.

But the competition doesn't end there. No, there has been a shift, a massive one, in young adults moving from Harvard Street to Academy and now to Arn-How Road when their high school days are over: we've mentioned Grutchfield's Greatest Coup numerous times, and don't forget about Seventh Class inductee Mark Ambrose being a member of the STB Class of 1969 before he became FHS's greatest girls' cross country coach ever; two of our current math teachers are St. Bernard's grads, too. The relationship works both ways: FHS Hall of Famer Mark Pierce, Class of 1987, is the boys' basketball coach at St. B's, and we all know the great job he's done at the Activity Center.

And in keeping in that vein, our Ninth Class Contributor is one of the all-time greats who made the seamless transition from St. Bernard's to Fitchburg High, all to the great joy and glorification of not only FHS athletics, but the Fitchburg Public Schools as a whole.

A three-sport standout for the Blue and Gold and an inductee into their Hall of Fame in 1984, Stanley Goode graduated from St. Bernard's in 1940, and after serving our nation in World War II, graduated from Boston College in 1950 following three years of football in Chestnut Hill. And after a year at the old Shirley Industrial School For Boys, reform school, on the old Shaker land fresh out of college, Goode applied and earned a job with the Fitchburg Public Schools as a Special Class teacher for the next four years, all while studying for his Master's in Education at Fitchburg State.

At that same time, Goode's indoctrination into Fitchburg High athletics, and especially that of FHS football, began. Marty McDonough already had Ed Sullivan by his side, but here was the kid who played at the foot of Tar Hill in Stanley Goode. McDonough brought him aboard, and after he moved up to take over as athletic director and Sully took over in the mid-1950s, Goode stayed on as an assistant along with fellow Hall of Famer Jim Meredith. After the fall of 1960 and the Red Raiders finished 5-1-2, the loss coming at the hands of Nashua and the two ties to Gardner and Leominster, Sullivan would stick around for one more year, the fall of 1961, a 5-3-1 year. Despite the record, it was a sad year following the passing of Jim Meredith. Stanley Goode, who by then had already served as a teacher and principal at the old Ashburnham Street School and at this time floated between South Fitchburg and Goodrich Street Elementaries as their principal, let McDonough know he was putting in for the head coach job. McDonough graciously submitted his name to then-principal Stephen Woodbury,

also a Hall of Famer, who accepted. Goode brought in two future legends in Jack Conway and Leominster native Marco Landon to assist him, essentially springboarding their careers in FHS athletics.

It was a rocky start: Even with such names as Jerszyk, Belliveau, and Dalton on the roster, the Red Raiders in 1962 weren't very good. The start of Goode's tenure was 0-4, but the 1963 team, enter the immortal Warren Muir, had a quick turnaround and went 6-3 after a 20-0 rout of the Blue Devils.

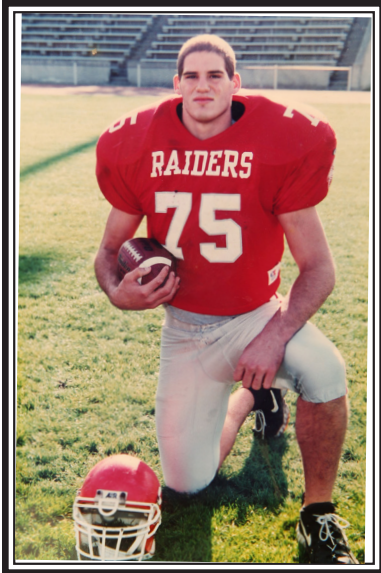
Most people, though, prefer to let their eyes linger more on the tail end of his coaching career when speaking of him. In 1964, with a meaty offensive line, Goode's team thrashed everyone. Muir was off to the races, thanks to the critical play of the line in Jerszyk, Belliveau, Bob Girouard, Steve Morey, and Dalton; we relayed in 2015 how Goode, after the game against Notre Dame of South Street, rewound the game film several times to show his charges the critical pancake blocking by Hall of Famer Dennis Belliveau to help Muir get to the end zone.

The Red and Gray entered the Thanksgiving morning contest with Leominster 6-0-2, and this one was a slobberknocker. Charlie Broderick was in the midst of his last season at the helm of LHS, and coaching his last game; no one knew it would be Stanley Goode's last game, as well. And as our fabled historian has noted, the Red Raiders trailed, 8-6, late in the fourth, when Goode turned to his immense linemen and told them to get Muir into the end zone. Muir ran left. Muir ran right. Right up the gut. Every time, the line rose to the challenge, flattening the enemy across the way until good ol' No. 28 crossed the goal line with less than two minutes remaining in The Game. Fitchburg won, 12-8, to finish 7-0-2; the seniors shared stogies with Goode, Conway, and Landon afterward, fumigating the showers. Goode was named Coach of the Year that year, but it was the last time he would coach the Red Raiders. Goode's true calling, like fellow inductee Peter Stephens, was in education: in accepting the appointment as principal of Fitchburg High School entering the 1965-66 school year, a position he would hold until 1974, he stepped down as head football coach; he would return to Academy Street as principal in 1984 for two years, until Bernie Welch took over in 1986. In addition to FHS and the Ashburnham Street School, he spent time at the old Hosmer School, at Rollstone Street School, the old West Fitchburg School. Truly, the amount of Fitchburg lives Goode touched as an educator and a coach numbered in the thousands.

His touch in FHS athletics extended beyond his retirement: During the 1990s, his granddaughters, including the Lizotte Sisters in Stephanie, Lori, and Megan, and Melissa LeBlanc, all made their marks in Fitchburg High athletic competition, via field hockey, girls' basketball, and track. Steph and Megan still live in the area with young families of their own, so it's quite possible to say Mr. Goode will be a multi-generational contributor to Red Raider success in more ways than one.

During his latter years, he resided at the Sundial, overlooking two of the most precious buildings with which we entrusted to his care: the 1936 Fitchburg High School building, and the sidelines of Crocker Field. Sadly, we lost this great man in May 2009. Posthumously, we welcome Stanley Goode to where he has always belonged, to us, Fitchburg High School, and the Hall of Fame on the Second Floor.

Keith Leavitt - 1999



A few hours before Fitchburg High hosted cross-town rival St. Bernard's for their 1991 football game, which turned out to be the last one for quite a few years, Ray Cosenza flung open the Circle Street gate and warmly welcomed the city's elementary school kids to Historic Crocker Field.

It was Punt, Pass, and Kick Day at the corner of Circle and Broad. During this event, kids got to test their skills in front of the Red Raider coaching staff. They also got free admission to that night's game against the Bernardians. What a perfect way to introduce the youngsters to the tradition that is Fitchburg High Football!

While there were plenty of kids that came through, one individual caught the eye of Cosenza right from the off. This tall, already near-six-foot young man came through the gate with his big smile, a smile as wide as a billboard, and Cosenza was awe-struck. Literally stars in the man's eyes to the point of immobility. "How old are you?" he asked. "Nine," Hall of Fame inductee Keith Leavitt replied. Fourth grade. Cosenza did the math in his head, and he utilized a great amount of patience: when he gets up to Academy Street, Cosenza thought, oh boy. Oh boy is right!

Leavitt's arrival in August of 1995 came after loads of thought: after all, his older brother Jon was a standout lineman at St. Bernard's under Joe Hickey, and John Rabidou for a time, but that was only a technicality, but after attending loads of FHS games with best friend and fellow lineman P.J. Roy, the decision to come to FHS instead of Tar Hill was a little easier. But as he stepped on the Amiott practice field for the first time as a Red Raider, he was thrown right into the fire. The 6-foot-8 Leavitt was a four-year varsity starter for Ray Cosenza, and with his size and ability, we're talking about raw ability here, gang: he didn't play in the Fitchburg Pop Warner system because of size and weight restrictions, managed to open massive holes for Ricky Morales, fellow Ninth Class inductee Chris Roy, Freddie Robinson, the LeBlanc boys, and Frank MacDonald. College coaches who were in the stands in those early years took one look at the young man wearing No. 75 and would come up to the old red press box to inquire as to his post-high school plans; when informed, "He's just a freshman" or "He's only a sophomore," those men either drooled or said, "Oh, we're not getting him." True story.

During that sophomore campaign in 1996, Leavitt, Roy, fellow Hall of Famer Matt Sallila, RJ Thibault, and Guy Lamoureux comprised a vicious offensive line that not many teams on the Red and Gray's schedule could handle. It wasn't rare to hear the opposition say, "Oh (expletive)! Here he comes again!" on certain plays. The end result that year? A 10-1-1 record, and a 50-0 whitewashing of Milford to claim the second Super Bowl title of the Ray Cosenza Era.

Two years later, Cosenza elected to pretty much beat Leominster by running toward Keith and P.J.'s side of the ball. Every. Single. Time. In that Turkey Day game of 1998, a 21-7 win for

the Big Red Machine, running backs Andy LeBlanc and Dustin LeBlanc each had spectacular rushing mornings (Andy 152 yards, 2 TDs; Dustin 169 and 1) against the Blue Devils in a game of smash mouth, run-it-down-your-throat football. Former S&E staff writer Steve Kendall wrote the next morning, “(Fitchburg’s) success was because of the offensive line, behind seniors Keith Leavitt, P.J. Roy, and B.J. Keenan, who boast one of the biggest and toughest offensive lines to come out of Circle Street in years!” Earlier in the season, after FHS beat Brockton to remain undefeated, the T&G called Leavitt’s line stacked and jacked. Who says the line doesn’t get any of the credit?

When football ended in early December, Keith traded in his pads and helmet for—at least at the start of his high school career, a basketball jersey. For most of his freshman games, he would be square under the basket when playing defense, making it rather easy for him to get rebounds; the same occurred at the other end of the floor for relatively easy second-chance baskets. But with the faster pace of varsity ball approaching and with him being a lumbering fellow, he instead traded in the basketball jersey for the track kit.

As a thrower, he had incredible strength to toss the shot put. According to fellow inductee Chris Woods’ vast files, Keith consistently tossed the big ol’ ball 47 feet and more: a Herculean heave. His tosses helped Fitchburg place second in the state Class C meet in the winter of his senior year. Woods also relays a story where he had to go down to the old Army-Navy store on Main Street to get something for Leavitt to wear in his junior season; for football, we got a little help from an NFC North team to shoe the big man.

In the classroom and in the halls of FHS, Keith Leavitt couldn’t be missed: he towered over everyone, of course, but he was also quiet and reserved. Yet when he spoke, the words came from a deep well, resonance filling every syllable.

In senior year with February and the National Signing Day looming, he had to make a decision about his post-interscholastic plans; he obviously chose football, and in the end, he elected to stay relatively close to home even as the offers poured in from Division 1 schools all over the country. He selected The Heights and Boston College, where he was, we believe, improperly used during his time there. What could have been for that gentle giant?

Nowadays, Keith works for the Worcester Superior Court as a probation officer, seriously, would you mess with the big man? And will occasionally pop in at Crocker Field to catch the Red and Gray in the fall.

Keith Leavitt, welcome to the FHS Hall of Fame!

Chris Woods - Coach



When most students leave high school, they prefer to move on: they've graduated, and other endeavors await them. In time, they may look back on their high school days as wistful memories pressed between the musty pages of a scrapbook; they may wipe away a tear as they think to those days, but afterward, they'll move on. It's behind them, they remind themselves. They have other things to do.

For Ninth Class inductee Chris Woods, he did, for a time, move on to the University of Maine at Orono, and that wasn't a destination for FHS Hall of Famers or anything! But with his college days done and dusted, he felt the pull, no, the desire, to return to that four-story brick building overlooking Downtown Fitchburg, and the cinders surrounding Crocker Field.

And how could he not? For Woods had been, for arguably far longer than many who have worn the Red and Gray, indoctrinated in the ways of Fitchburg High School from practically inside the womb.

Woods, the son of the legendary Don Woods, himself an FHS Hall of Famer from the Class of 1940, and the former Jan Pick, daughter of Worcester Commerce legend Louis Pick, of the FHS Class of 1950, was practically tattooed with a Red and Gray F when he arrived on the scene in 1958. And while Don regaled him with tales of Amcott, of those great FHS teams from the 1930s and of his father, Howard Woods, an old FHS cager who graduated in 1917 from the sandstone building on Academy Street, he took in every word and decided at a young age that he would, at the very least, compete for the glory of Fitchburg High.

And he did: if one asks nicely, Chris will tell of his days as free safety on the FHS junior varsity team that beat Leominster, 8-6, in the annual Chicken Bowl back in 1973, or of how he scored a game-winning goal on the 7-6-1 boys' soccer team alongside fellow Hall of Famer Mike Gallo, a midfielder on that team, in his senior year of 1975; he played two years of varsity soccer, missing the postseason his senior year by half a game. He was also a pretty accomplished runner; Don Woods shipped him into the willing hands of HOFers Erkki Koutonen and Ed Gastonguay, where he excelled as a member of the 1974-75 undefeated FHS indoor track team, the 1976 Central Suburban Indoor Track League Div. I Meet Champions, and the District III undefeated outdoor team in 1976, running alongside Gallo and another FHS Hall of Famer in Doug Romano. But it went further than that, if that's even possible.

After Koutonen retired from coaching in mid-1970s, Gastonguay became the cross country coach, while Peter Bergeron landed the track job. Bergeron needed an assistant for spring track in 1983, and right there, a few years out of college, was Chris Woods. He did so well in that position, then-athletic director Tom Crank appointed him as the new indoor and outdoor track coach when Bergeron stepped away in 1984. He would stay in that position until June of 2016.

With Doug Grutchfield as the athletic director, with Prop. 2 1/2 finally behind us and with more money in the athletic budget, the middle school cross country program was born. Chris was appointed head soccer coach at Memorial for a year, until a guidance counseling job opened up at B.F. Brown following the passing of Bob Cravedi in the middle of the 1988-89 school year. It only made sense for him to take over the B.F. Brown cross country teams, until Coach Ed decided the 1993 cross country season would be his last at the helm of the Red Raider harriers. Who to pick as his replacement? The answer was easy.

A year earlier, another guidance job had opened up at FHS, and Woods came up with the Class of 1996's freshmen. As the new cross country coach, Woods then took to the Coggs Hall trails like a goose to Mirror Lake, and as he now held a monopoly on the running disciplines on Academy Street, he would soon further transform Red Raider track and field into a championship outfit, chipping away at the souls of his charges with gentle instruction about form and nutrition. And just how many titles did Woods win as coach of all three? Quite a few, and not just a handful: Upwards of 30, I repeat, 30, championships in various meets, and his athletes picked up a few individual titles, themselves. Just a few, though.

Woods also joins quite a few former athletes he had under his wing as Hall of Famers: Balauger and Cormier and the Bennetts, the McCall boys, the Keenans, Bobby Williams, Jeff Guenette, and Matt Sallila. Soon to join him at some point in the future? Some of his latter career student-athletes such as Onikeku and Ramirez, Bugarin and Lemieux, Marotta and Higgins are, and you can call Vegas now, sure-fire bets to join him.

For 96 total seasons as a coach, 87 of them consecutively, Chris Woods was not only the embodiment of what it means to be a Red Raider, what we now call the Red Raider Way, but he was the embodiment of what it meant to be devoted to the student-athletes that filtered through Fitchburg High School.

And he's even dedicated to making sure the track programs at FHS continue: in the summer of 2006, he started the Greater Fitchburg Track & Field Club, which promotes track and field to the youngsters of our great city and beyond. In 2009, Woods told this typist he did it in honor of his father, a faraway, choked-up look in his eyes as he spoke.

Chris retired in June 2016, but not before former standouts feted him at the Mid-Wach meet, his final one, at Crocker Field. Two weeks later, the FHS boys won the weight pentathlon for him. A nifty retirement present. And not only that: this past June, the Mass. State Track Coaches Association inducted him into its Hall of Fame for his time here at FHS. So to say his plaque-holding hand has received a workout this year is an understatement.

Nowadays, Chris is the voice of the Red Raiders for football, and he's still around track meets as an official. If he's not on his bicycle during his free time, he's imitating the voice of his cat Lucky, usually about the state of the litter box.

It is an absolute honor to cap off Chris's Fitchburg High career by welcoming him to his forever home in the FHS Hall of Fame!

1991 Football Team



History tells us Fitchburg High School started its football program in 1894, and there have been many fantastic players, from Ossie MacLean to Quinton Perkins and so many young men in between, who have worn the Red and Gray with extreme amounts of personal pride.

History also tells us, with great dismay, that Fitchburg High School's football program fell off the pace following Marco Landon's incredible 1972 team which won the first Super Bowl; other than one year, the Red Raiders were second fiddle to the Blue Devils from 1973 until 1990. One and

seventeen. We don't say this with any amount of joy.

And while the 1990 team came on with a great head of steam in the second half of the season, Ray Cosenza's second year in charge at the corner of Circle and Broad came to a close against the eventual Central Mass. champions on a rather frigid Thanksgiving morning.

That winter, as the returning underclassmen gathered in the weight room for the Bigger, Faster, Stronger off-season training programs, a vow was made: it is time to turn history on its ear.

The 1991 Fitchburg High School football team, as history does indeed show us, ended a dark gridiron period and ushered in a glorious one.

As the boys got together in mid-August, August 18th, a Sunday afternoon, the goals were laid out while Cosenza handed out the one-subject notebooks that would serve as the playbook: we're going to play hard, we're going to beat Leominster, and we're going to win the Super Bowl.

Headed into double sessions, the players, and what players we had in that year: Hall of Famer Zack McCall the junior tailback; Eighth Class inductee Bobby Williams at fullback; two outstanding wide receivers in senior Phil Snow and junior Ish Gelpi, and a line that consisted of John Sallila, Rob Rebovich, Rodney Dean to catch those over-pursued screen passes at tight end, Mark Pawlak, and David Souza; Jack Naylor, the star kicker with the flat-toed shoe; just so many to mention, bought in. Between sessions, as the team lounged on the grass near the baseball diamond, they wondered about what the next three-plus months would bring.

For two weeks, the coaching staff got this group going, working the plays hardly anyone on our schedule could stop. We went up to Gardner one afternoon for the jamboree, and we worked out the kinks in preparation for the long season. Then, the unthinkable occurred. Have you ever heard a pin drop in rush hour traffic? This team can attest to it: during a defensive practice session leading into the first week against Wachusett, captain Mark Pawlak dropped, clutching his leg, screaming in agony. The team backed away as the coaches attended to him; if this typist closes his eyes and thinks about that overcast Wednesday afternoon, he can still hear it all, the screams and the accompanying silence while motorists whizzed by Amriott. Suffice it to say, the remainder of practice was a muted affair. We found out the news the next day, and it confirmed our worst fears: Mark would be out for a while with a broken ankle, but that did not stop him from coming to practice every day, and he would go out to midfield for the coin toss while on crutches. Our team, after a talk from Ray, re-committed to our goals.

The good thing about the 1991 season was that six of our first seven games were home games. No bus rides, lots of postgame Espresso Pizza. The Red and Gray welcomed and throttled Wachusett, Milford, Marlboro in succession, before we went to Shrewsbury the following Friday, our first road game. The Colonials simply had no chance as Zack and the boys, the line controlling everything, jumped out to a 42-0 lead at the half. Even the Class of 1995 got into the act late in the second half, and our hosts scored once on our freshmen. Big deal. 4-0

St. Bernard's then made the mile and a half drive from the foot of Tar Hill to Crocker Field. That week was different than the first few, as this was Cosenza's old team, and he wanted to beat them. He wanted to beat them bad. There was a different tenor in practice, as if this week had greater importance in the grand scheme of things.

As game time drew closer, Ray paced the length of the downstairs hallway, his left cheek twitching as he mentally prepared for the upcoming pre-game speech. The team sat in the next room, waiting. At 6:53, every eye was on him. "You're not good enough," he said. "You're not good enough to beat those guys." He referred to when he was the Bernies coach, and he had watched STB beat the Raiders in 1988, his final year before Grutchfield's Greatest Coup.

That did it, and the talk didn't last long. The Red and Gray steamrolled the Blue and Gold, 36-12. Gardner was up next, and this one, too, was an interesting week: one of the Wildcat assistants drew a paycheck from the Fitchburg Public Schools, none other than the senior class's vice principal, Mike Hurd. The word of warning from the Raider coaching staff was simple: don't bring your playbooks to school. Leave them in the clubhouse, or leave them at home. Meh. Not a play was stolen. 6-0. Then came Brockton.

When Cosenza came to Academy Street, he set out to bring the best teams to Crocker Field, and the Boxers were the first to answer our summons. As the saying goes, to be the best, you have to beat the best, and in 1991, they didn't come any better than Armand Columbo's boys. That week, the Globe and the Herald wrote that we were out of our hill town minds. No one, not even our own Fitchburg Sentinel, gave the Red and Gray much of a chance to win, let alone be competitive against the Boxers, whose senior class were freshmen when they came up to Leominster and were thoroughly embarrassed. The Boston papers said we would get embarrassed. Six wins against Central Mass. teams were nothing compared to an Eastern Mass. schedule.

As Lee Corso would say: NOT SO FAST! This was a rockfight, and FHS gave it everything it had. When it was all said and done, many eyes were opened to the young men from the Paper City, who had just punched Brockton in the mouth: The Boxers escaped with a 7-0 win, and returned to Route 123 with their tails between their legs.

Around this time, Mark Pawlak, who went through intense physical therapy over these last few weeks, returned to live action, good ol' No. 58 on his back. Kelley then suffered an injury during practice in the lead-up to our next game as fall's chill winds swirled, and Mike Beaulac stepped into the starter's role admirably on the road.

We went up to Townsend at 7-1 for what turned out to be the first of two against North Middlesex. As our esteemed historian wrote in the biography for HOFer Zack McCall, NM had rolled into Crocker Field for the 1990 contest on a serious win streak, and we had snapped it on a late Billy Paskell touchdown/ Shannon Keenan blocked field goal at the end. The Pats didn't forget as we went north, and on that cold November night in 1991, these two behemoths battled to a 21-19 North Middlesex win. We had a feeling, though, that we would see them again; with that, a nice secondary rivalry had begun.

And after a 27-24 close win over Westboro, that leads into Leominster, and for the first time since 1984, Fitchburg was tops following a 14-0 victory. The Super Bowl awaited, against North Middlesex. That first week of December, an ice storm blew through Central Mass, leaving all remaining teams searching for practice time. As was traditional, all teams got a walk-through at WPI, as it was hard, concrete-like artificial turf, and everyone was used to playing on grass. But neither Fitchburg nor NM got to Worcester, as several inches of un-clearable ice covered Alumni Field. Instead, the game was moved to Bartlett High's home stadium in Webster.

It was a cold, sunny Sunday, and the Raiders were ready. It was a tight one for the first three quarters as the two sides matched each other with a touchdown apiece, but as McCall danced through the line for a fourth-quarter score, and as Kelley connected with Snow for another, we willed the clock to move just a little faster. At triple zero, the Fitchburg Faithful swarmed the muddy field in jubilant celebration. FHS, at 10-2, were the Central Mass. champions!

In all, Fitchburg High scored 344 points, 28-plus points per game, while allowing 117 points, just over 9 per game. Incredible. The winning just didn't end there: this team, as history shows us, kicked off an incredible run of success against Leominster, and not only that, helped lead the Red and Gray to eight consecutive Super Bowls.

A team for the ages, now immortalized in our Hall of Fame.

THE RED AND GRAY

Dedicated to Fitchburg High School

Elizabeth A. H. Sleeper

Ada C. Cogswell

All hail to our Alma Mater,
All hail to the Red and Gray,
All hail to our dear old high school,
We'll cherish her name for aye,
We'll glory in her triumph,
We'll weep for her in her loss,
We'll wear her crown of victory,
We'll bear the weight of her cross,

Three cheers for the Red and Gray,
Alma Mater we'll love for aye;
We'll stand by the right and truth
She taught us in our youth.
Her noble lessons we'll hold fast,
So long as life shall last,
Her praise and fame we'll sing for aye,
Three cheers for the Red and Gray.

All hail to our Alma Mater,
For dear to our hearts is she,
Dear in the days now fleeting,
And dear in the years to be.
And when, our school days over,
We meet on life's path way,
We'll greet with joy in passing
The friends of the Red and Gray.

Three cheers for the Red and Gray,
Alma Mater we'll love for aye;
We'll stand by the right and truth
She taught us in our youth.
Her noble lessons we'll hold fast,
So long as life shall last,
Her praise and fame we'll sing for aye,
Three cheers for the Red and Gray.

Program

Welcome:

Ray Cosenza

Masters of Ceremonies:

Ray Cosenza

Introduction of Inductees

(1) 1960 Boys Cross Country

(7) Brandy Green

(2) Arthur Capone

(8) Ryan Howe

(3) Peter Stephens

(9) Stanley A. Goode

(4) Norbert Pickett

(10) Keith Leavitt

(5) Chris Roy

(11) Chris Woods

(6) Joe Costa

(12) 1991 Football Team

Hall of Fame Committee

Raymond Cosenza, Chairperson*

Mike Kelley, Treasurer

Sean Sweeney, Program Write-ups & Secretary

Steve Kelley, Web-Site Coordinator

Jeremy Roche, Principal

Committee Members

Ann Miller-Shoesmith*

Debbie Dion

Ed Gastonguay*

P. J. Roy

Michael Conry

Fred Sullivan*

Tara Sweeney

Cindy Coleman-Donelan

Paul Agnese

Alan Twomley

Posthumous Members

Charles Miller

Donald Woods

Doug Grutchfield

Bernie Buckley

Marco Landon

Robert Duncan

Chris Bicoules

Special thanks to Sean Sweeney, Stephen LeBlanc, and Steve Kelley for their hard work in producing this program and Web site.

*** Original committee members.**

FHS Athletic Hall of Fame web site can be found at:

<http://fitchburghalloffame.org/>

Hall of Fame Members

Clarence Amiott	1910	Alvah Crocker	1920
Lawrence Hobbs	1923	John Oliva	1927
Lauri Myllykkangas	1927	Voit Lassila	1929
Stephen Woodbury	1930	Alfred Secino	1931
Roland Blake	1931	Carl Fellows	1931
Donald Allen	1931	Milton Savitt	1932
William Whelan	1932	Raymond Belliveau	1933
John Chalmers	1934	Jimmy Leo	1936
Donald "Ozzie" McLeane	1937	Donald Woods	1940
Charlie Pappas	1944	Ronnie Watson	1946
Corky Ervin	1948	Ray Ablondi	1948
Joe Cushing	1948	Arthur "Bucker" Shea	1948
Norman "Red" Goguen	1948	Bob Duncan	1948
Loring "Bud" Stevenson	1949	Jim Meredith	1950
Joe Hannon	1951	Dick Boutwell	1957
Dave King	1958	Mike Conry	1958
Walter "Buzzy" Congram	1958	Ronnie Thompson	1959
Roger Kielty	1959	Dennis LeBlanc	1961
Barry MacLean	1962	Leon Drury	1962
Lawrence Shattuck	1962	Joe Spagnuola	1964
Warren Muir	1965	John "Jack" Jerszyk	1965
John Sultan	1965	Dennis Belliveau	1965
Mike McNamara	1968	Leo LaRoche	1969
Tom DiGeronimo	1969	Chris Petrides	1969
Allen Glenn	1970	Randy Palmer	1970
John Randall Thomas	1971	Mike Pucko	1971
Steve Ciccolini	1972	Debbie Dion	1972
Mike Lasorsa	1973	Ray Haaker	1973
Doug Romano	1976	Mike Gallo	1976
David Caputi	1977	Peter Bergeron	1978
Kathy Lawler	1979	Todd Becker	1980
Phil Schoenig	1980	Tom DiGeronimo	1982
Johnny Pappas	1982	Louella Earley	1983
Mike LeBlanc	1983	Paul DiGeronimo	1984
Pam Briggs	1985	Michael Connolly	1985
Frank Balaguer	1985	Mark Pierce	1987
Scott Wirtanen	1986	Cindy Coleman-Donelan	1987
Paula Goodchild	1990	Craig Cormier	1990
Darren Bennett	1990	Tara Sweeney	1991
Meghan Normandin	1991	Bobby Williams	1992
Zach McCall	1993	Tracy Smith	1993
Matt Salilla	1993	Ryan Keenan	1994
Karen LaFrenier	1995	James McCall	1995
Todd Steffanides	1995	Sara Thomas	1996
Daniel Schneider	1996	Shelly Richard	1997
Ricky Morales	1997	Jeff Guenette	1999
Jason Twomley	2001	Beth Richards	2003
Courtney Jacobs	2004	Christine Laakso-Shaw	2004

Fitchburg High School

Hall of Fame Ninth Induction



Sunday
November 5, 2017
at
Great Wolf Lodge
Fitchburg, MA