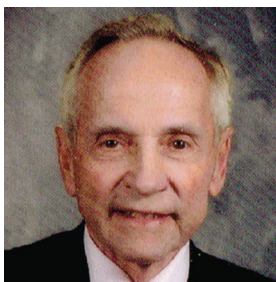
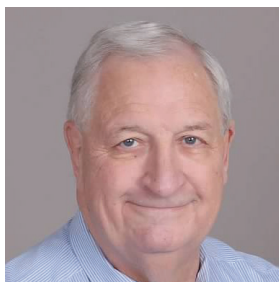


Celebrating our 48th Year Honoring

TOM LAWSON CLARKSTOWN 1966, MULTI-SPORT, NOTRE DAME FOOTBALL
BOB WILLIS SPRING VALLEY 1959, BASEBALL STANDOUT, EDUCATION LEADER
EMIL WILLIS SPRING VALLEY 1952, OUTSTANDING ATHLETE, & COACH, EDUCATOR
1971 NORTH ROCKLAND FOOTBALL TEAM



ROCKLAND COUNTY BOULDERS STADIUM
AUGUST 14, 2021



PREMIER

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ROCKLAND COUNTY SPORTS HALL OF FAME

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Chairman's Message – Pete Scheibner



Congratulations to the 1971 North Rockland High School football team, coached by the late, legendary Ralph Cordisco. Enroute to compiling a perfect 9-0 record, the Red Raiders tallied a Rockland County record 308 points while yielding only 14 – a most impressive achievement.

It is a great honor that in our 48th anniversary year we induct such a top-notch team into the Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame. This is a tradition that we will continue each year at a Rockland Boulders baseball game.

We are also inducting Emil Willis Jr., a 1952 athletic standout at Spring Valley and Rockland Community College coach and educator. I personally owe Emil a debt of gratitude for his help in gaining several coaching opportunities. Joining Emil will be his younger brother Bob Willis, a 1959 baseball standout at Spring Valley and longtime education leader. Both Willis brothers will be joining their father, the late Emil Sr., who was inducted into the RCSHOF in 1980. We are also honored to be inducting Tom Lawson, a 1966 star multi-sport athlete for Clarkstown and a Notre Dame football standout. Tom joins his brother Bob Lawson, who was inducted into the RCSHOF in 2018.

I would like to personally thank the work of Bob Veltidi, our Selection Committee chair, and members of that committee for gathering nominations of many excellent teams and submitting a ballot of eight teams.

As is our custom at Rockland Boulders games, we will be raising funds for a charity – in this case, Touching Bases Baseball of Rockland, which allows adults with disabilities to enjoy America's pastime in a safe, supportive and fun atmosphere. The league was founded by Bob Baird in 2002 and quickly grew to as many as 15 teams with 220 players, ages 21 to 92. After skipping 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic, Touching Bases hopes to resume play this fall and celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2022.

Please visit our website, www.rcshf.org, to view bios of all our inductees. The website includes enshrinement requirements for selection, and nominations for future candidates or teams can be submitted online as well.

Many thanks to Vinnie Sciortino, Chuck Maze, Bill Rubbert, Alan and Bob Veltidi and all the members of our organization, and the Rockland Boulders for making this evening memorable.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Scheibner".

Peter Scheibner



VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT WWW.RCSHF.ORG

ROCKLAND COUNTY SPORTS HALL OF FAME August 14, 2021

~ LIST OF INDUCTEES ~

EMIL WILLIS

Spring Valley 1952, Outstanding Athlete & Coach, Educator

Nominated By: Bob Veltidi

Introduced By: Alan Veltidi

Trophy Sponsor: Alan & Bob Veltidi

Plaque Sponsor: RCC Exercise & Human Performance, Athletic Department
Dan Keeley – For plaque given to Spring Valley High School

BOB WILLIS

Spring Valley 1959, Baseball Standout, Education Leader

Nominated By: Bob Veltidi

Introduced By: Alan Veltidi

Trophy Sponsor: Alan & Bob Veltidi

TOM LAWSON

Clarkstown 1966, Multi-Sport, Notre Dame Football

Nominated By: Bill Rubbert

Introduced By: Bill Rubbert

Trophy Sponsor: Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame

Plaque Sponsor: Clarkstown North Athletic Department

1971 NORTH ROCKLAND FOOTBALL TEAM

Nominated By: Bill Madden

Memorial Tributes by Chuck Maze and Dan Keeley

Coach Joe Casarella will speak on behalf of the team and introduce team members

Plaque Sponsor: Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OFFICERS)

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1971 NORTH ROCKLAND FOOTBALL TEAM



VARSITY TEAM

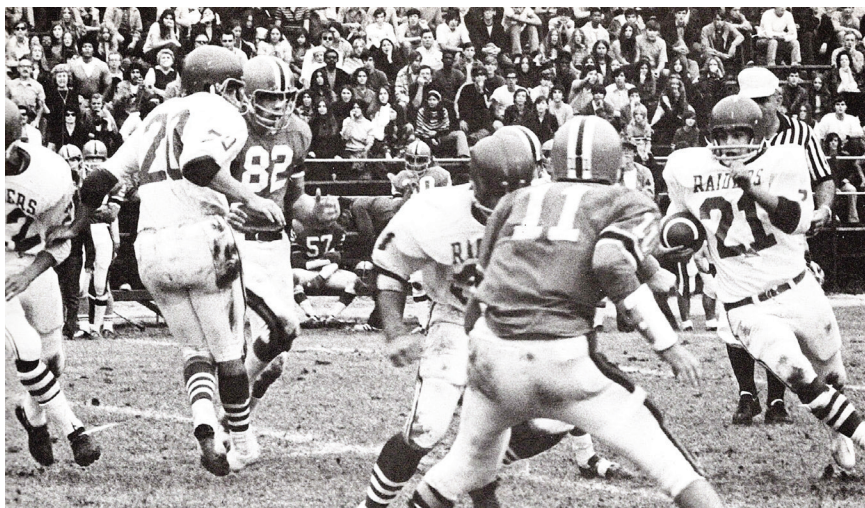
Front Row (L-R): Coach Ralph J. Cordisco, L. Lanton, R. Furst, J. Hoke, J. Knapp, D. Montemarano, R. Novak, D. Keeley, C. Wideberg, G. Armida, W. Jones, R. Sanchez. *Second Row (L-R):* S. Crow, F. Schultz, W. Kee, V. DeJesus, S. Keyser, B. Beamon, S. Courter, P. Brennan, R. Silvera, D. Arrigo, D. Kovalsky, E. Heitzman, S. Watson, R. Margiotta, B. Davidson, J. Ward, T. Nolan, J. Confrey, R. Pesci, J. Giardina, T. Hylas, E. McCormick, J. Brechbiel. Defensive Coach, Joseph Casarella, Line Coach, Robert Nadal.

RALPH CORDISCO, Head Coach

Inducted in 1984. A 1937 graduate of Haverstraw High School, he was born and raised in Haverstraw and continues to be a fixture in the North Rockland community. A member of Haverstraw High's first football team in 1933, he won four varsity football letters, was a three-time All-County basketball player, and won two varsity letters each in baseball and track. From 1956 through 1979, Cordisco coached the Haverstraw and North Rockland football teams to a record of 123 wins, 50 losses and 8 ties, winning five Rockland PSAL titles and two co-championships, and had a winning streak of 27 games from 1970 to '72. He was chosen Rockland Coach of the Year in football six times, and by the New York Daily News as Coach of the Year six times. He led the school's

basketball teams to five County PSAL titles from 1950 to '57, and was Coach of the Year four times. Cordisco was the school's longtime golf coach and the school district's director of athletics for many years. He attended Syracuse University on a full scholarship and earned three varsity football awards there. He has held numerous administrative positions in athletics, including president of the Rockland PSAL from 1965 to '77, recipient of National High School Athletic Director of the Year for 1982, sponsored by the National High School Athletic Coaches Association.





VARSITY COACHES - (L-R) Robert Nadal, Line Coach; Ralph J. Cordisco, Head Coach; Joseph Casarella, Defensive Coach

JANUARY 1985 | THE JOURNAL NEWS

Raiders 1971 football team selected best



***Editors Note:** This is the fifth of a five-part series looking back on the top Rockland scholastic sports teams of the past 25 years. Teams were selected in a ballot of 50 people from the sports scene. The stories are being presented in ascending order. Today's Piece takes a look at the No. 1 team in the balloting.*

By BILL MADDEN
Staff Writer

Over the last 25 years, Rockland County has seen its share of superior high-school athletic teams. But no team stood taller over its opponents than the 1971 North Rockland football team. That tackle-tough gang of Red Raiders was better than even its own coaches could believe.

"It's the high-school coaches dream to be able to have a football team that has all the phases of the game together," said Ralph Cordisco, the head coach in 1971 and current



Athletic Director at North Rockland. "In 1971, we had the perfect football team. Let the record speak for itself."

That season, the Raiders marched through Rockland County like General Sherman through Atlanta. It was devastating.

"It was just unreal," said Cordisco. "It was impossible for us to keep the scores down because once we started rallying, even the substitutes kept it going. We could. do whatever we wanted to do."

Cordisco had a good feeling about the 1971 season before it started. Although he had accomplished players like George Wargo and Joe Attigliato off the 8-0 club of 1970, the Raiders has an experienced nucleus and a wonder boy in the backfield named Jim Brechbiel.

What transpired over the next three months went beyond everyone's expectations.

In the season opener against Tappan Zee, Brechbiel scored three touchdowns and kicked five extra points in a 44-0 win. Ramapo was up next and North Rockland pounded the Gryphons, 48-0. Suffern went down the next Saturday by the same count and people were beginning to take notice.

The Red Machine increased its record to 4-0 with a 28-6 win over Pearl River and made it five-of-five with a 42-8 triumph over Spring Valley. Nanuet (50-0) and Nyack (38-0) were manhandled on ensuing Saturdays and Clarkstown North, the best opponent that the PSAL could offer, was blanked by a 10-0 score.

In the season finale, against a much-heralded Newburgh team, the Raiders

Continued

enthralled a home crowd of 9,000 with a 21-6 victory. It is believed to be the largest group ever to witness a county football game.

The final facts were startling. North Rockland allowed just three touchdowns in nine contests and outscored PSAL teams by a 308-14 tally. Twelve players were named to the first All-County team, including nine starters on offense and Brechbiel was named New York State's Player-of-the-Year. He was also an All-American pick and named the state's Athlete-of-the-Year.

"The offense was super. The offensive line could just move people out and we had fantastic people in the backfield," Cordisco said. "Defensively, we had great talent and a good coach (Joe Casarella, the current North Rocklands head coach). We would completely shut down teams.

Brechbiel, a senior halfback, was a remarkable performer. Despite sitting



Jim Brechbiel
Player of the Year

out good portions of the second half against many teams, he rushed for 913 yards and scored 14 touchdowns. In total he tallied 131 points on touchdowns, a two point conversion, three field goals and 36 extra points. His 122 points in league play outpointed five team totals.

"Brechbiel was the most dominant player that I've ever seen. His ability as a football player was just unbelievable," said Cordisco. "He did it all. He was so quick and so durable. He had a phenomenal ability to change direction at the last second and leave defenders helpless".

Quarterback Ray Sanchez, a splendid passer, and fullback Chuch Maze, Brechbiel's blocker, were first-team

selections, while tight end Scott Keyser and wide receiver Victor DeJesus were other all-star choices. Center Ed Heitzman, tackles Tom Nolan and John Confrey and guard Bill Davidson gave Cordisco and offensive coordinator Bob Nadal a dream alignment.

The defense is best remembered for its size and physical play. Using a six-man front, guards Ben Beamon (5-11, 255) and strongman Davidson were solid as rocks. Rich Pesci (5-10, 219), Keyser, Confrey (6-0, 215) and Jim Ward (6-0, 195) were other linemen, while Maze and Bill Kee were competent linebackers.

The defensive backfield was exceptional with all-state safety DeJesus leading the way. Willard "Bouncer" Jones and Gary Armida comprised a super cornerback combination. Sanchez and Dan Keeley, the reserve quarterback, also helped against passing.

"The 1971 team was absolutely one of the best teams in county history and I say that without fear of contradiction," said Cordisco. "We could run, we could pass, we could pass defense and we had a strong kicking game. It was all there.

"Thirteen players from that team received full college scholarships that all added up to \$168,000. I knew all the kids from the time they were midgets and that year was something very special. We had a dedicated coaching staff and the kids never stopped working. I'll never forget that team."

And neither will anyone else.



1971 NORTH ROCKLAND HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM

Rockland County P.S.A.L. Champions

Overall Record 9-0

Rockland County P.S.A.L. Record 8-0

Extends consecutive winning streak to 18 games

Schedule

N.R. 44	Tappan Zee	0
N.R. 48	Ramapo	0
N.R. 48	Suffern	0
N.R. 28	Pearl River	6
N.R. 42	Spring Valley	8
N.R. 50	Nanuet	0
N.R. 38	Nyack	0
N.R. 10	Clarkstown North	0
N.R. 21	Newburgh	6

R.C.P.S.A.L. Team Statistics

Sets county record with 308 points scored,

Breaking record of 275 points set by Haverstraw in 1962

Sets county record of allowing 14 points, breaking record of 20,
Set by Spring Valley in 1965

Sets touchdown record for season with 46

8 players named to New York Daily News All Star Team

3 players named to All-State squad

14 players named to All-County teams

R.C.P.S.A.L. Individual Leaders

Scoring: Jim Brechbiel, 122 points

Kicking: PAT 33, Jim Brechbiel
FG 3, Jim Brechbiel

Rushing: Jim Brechbiel, 115 attempts,
825 yards, 7.2 yards per carry

Passing: Ray Sanchez, 78 attempts,
38 completions, 654 yards, 9 TD

Receiving: Scott Keyser, 14 receptions,
284 yards, 5 TD

**1971 NORTH ROCKLAND HIGH SCHOOL
VARSITY FOOTBALL TEAM
ALL-COUNTY SELECTIONS**

First Team Offense

E Scott Keyser*
E Victor DeJesus
T John Confrey
T Tom Nolan
G Bill Davidson*
C Ed Heitzman
QB Ray Sanchez
RB Jim Brechbiel*
RB Chuck Maze

First Team Defense

DL Ben Beamon*
DL Rich Pesci
DL Bill Davidson
DB Victor DeJesus*
DB Willard Jones

*Unanimous Selection

Second Team Offense

E Steve Crow
G Steve Courter

Second Team Defense

DL Scott Keyser
DL Steve Courter
LB Chuck Maze
DB Dan Keeley

Honorable Mention

Carl Wideberg
Jim Ward
Gary Armida

Honors

Jim Brechbiel	All American New York State Player of the Year All State Offensive Back Rockland County Back of the Year
Bill Davidson	First Team All State Guard Rockland County Lineman of the Year
Victor DeJesus	First Team All State Safety
Ralph J. Cordisco	Rockland County Coach of the Year

NORTH ROCKLAND HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL ROSTER 1971

NO	NAME	POS	GRADE	HT	WT
10	LOUIS LANTON	QB	9	5-8	140
11	WILLARD JONES	B	12	5-8	145
12	RAY SANCHEZ	QB	12	6-0	170
20	DAN KEELEY	QB	12	5-10	175
21	CARL WIDEBERG	B	12	5-8	172
22	ROBERT FURST	B	11	5-7	145
22	JOE ERDELY	B	11	5-7	150
23	VICTOR DEJESUS	B	12	6-0	170
25	JERRY KNAPP	B	12	5-7	140
30	JIM BRECHBIEL	B	12	5-10	175
31	GARY ARMIDA	B	12	5-9	175
32	FRANK SCHULTZ	E	12	5-9	185
40	CHUCK MAZE	FB-LB	11	6-0	175
41	DAN MONTEMARANO	C	12	5-7	165
42	DOUGLAS KOVALSKY	LB	11	5-11	180
44	EDWARD MCCORMICK	LB	11	5-10	150
50	RICHARD SILVERA	C	11	5-9	165
51	PETE BRENNAN	C	12	5-9	200
53	EDWARD HEITZMAN	C	12	5-9	165
60	STEVE COURTER	G	12	5-11	210
61	WILLIAM KEE	LB	11	5-11	185
62	ROBERT NOVAK	G	11	5-8	150
63	WILLIAM DAVIDSON	G	12	5-11	175
64	JOSEPH GIARDINA	G	11	5-10	230
65	SCOTT WATSON	G	11	5-11	175
70	JIM WARD	T	12	6-0	195
71	TOM NOLAN	T	11	5-11	195
72	JOHN CONFREY	T	12	6-0	215
73	JACK WARGO	T	11	5-9	245
74	BEN BEAMON	G	11	5-11	235
75	RICHARD PESCI	T	11	5-10	210
80	TIM HYLAS	E	11	5-9	155
81	SCOTT KEYSER	E	11	6-1	189
82	JOHN HOKE	E	12	5-9	165
83	DON ARRIGO	G	11	5-9	180
84	RICHARD MARGIOTTA	E	11	6-0	165
85	STEVE CROW	E	12	6-1	165

COACHING STAFF

RALPH J. CORDISCO, *HEAD COACH*
 JOSEPH CASARELLA, *DEFENSIVE COACH*
 ROBERT NADAL, *LINE COACH*
 PAT AMENDOLA, *JV COACH*
 JAMES HOCTOR, *JV COACH*
 ROBERT SQUILLINI, *TEAM MANAGER*



TOM LAWSON

CLARKSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL

CLASS OF 1966

Tom Lawson competed for Clarkstown High School and the University of Notre Dame in the 1960s, which was arguably the greatest decade for male athletic supremacy in Rockland County sports history. This is evidenced by standout inductees in the Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame from the 1960s such as Paul Toscano, JoJo Mackey, Jim Ashcroft, Ron Edwards, Frank Samoylo, Bob Corvino, Gibby Sweet, Bryan Hassett, Tim St. Lawrence and Mickey Wittman, among others. In those days many of the best athletes played and achieved accolades in multiple sports. Tom Lawson played and excelled for Clarkstown in four sports.

A versatile and outstanding athlete during the heyday of Clarkstown athletics, Tom earned seven varsity letters in the sports of football, baseball, basketball and track. He is best known for his accomplishments in football. Tom played on the 1963 undefeated 8-0 championship Ram team as a sophomore. He later became captain of the team his senior year – the second of three Lawson brothers to be so honored. Bob Lawson was captain in 1963 and Steve Lawson in 1973. During that 1965 season, Tom was a unanimous Rockland first-team All-County selection and a New York Daily News All-Metro Player.

Tom played in an era when there were no statistics kept for such things as pancake blocks wiping out potential tacklers and



fostering a solid team running game; defensive pressures on opposing quarterbacks and running backs; tackles for losses; sacks. The fact that opposing coaches freely admitted they ran away from Lawson to the other side to avoid his outstanding ability to wreak havoc on an opposing offense highlighted his exceptional talents. He was one of the most dominating two-way football players in Rockland County during the decade. This was evidenced by him being named unanimous first-team All-County lineman in his senior year.

Along the way, Tom was saluted as Lineman of the Week by The Journal-News on October 4, 1965 for his performance the previous Saturday. In an early-season game Tom led the blocking for a crushing running attack in a game that the Rams won 32-0 against Tappan Zee. On defense he caused a mid-air fumble, which a teammate returned for a touchdown.

Tom had other spectacular games as well, such as the season finale the week of November 6, when as a defensive end in the first quarter he blocked a punt at the Nanuet 5-yard line, which led to a 1-yard touchdown on Clarkstown's first possession in

a 51-0 victory. In the second quarter, Tom hauled in a 10-yard touchdown reception. Following the score, he lined up as a place-kicker and promptly successfully passed for a two-point PAT conversion. Later in the game, Tom caught two 2-point conversions. This brought his total points scored to 10 for the day in addition to throwing for two 2-point conversions and blocking a punt that led to another six points (20 points total offense). All in a day's work for the guy who never came off the football field all season except for halftimes when the great Rams band took the field and played the Clarkstown HS fight song – Cheers, Cheers for Old Notre Dame. Tom did not know at the time he would hear that fight song for four more years in South Bend, Indiana with the most elite college football program in the country in the mid-1960s. For the Clarkstown Rams, Tom played offense, defense, special teams kicking for extra points, throwing and running for two-point conversions – you name it, he did it all. Tom constantly came up with the big play. He also did have a recorded statistic as the team's leading scorer that season.

Tom also played on two Rockland County basketball championship teams, 1964-65 and 1965-66, starting on the latter Ram team. He was a good ball handler and dangerous outside shooter who complemented the other players on his team. At 6-foot-5 he could post up smaller players and was an excellent defender who could bang inside. In a key late-season matchup in his senior season between the Rams and Nyack, the two top teams in the league, Tom came up with clutch plays. With the Rams trailing 54-52 with 20 seconds left, his tip-in tied the score. Nyack missed a shot with 12 seconds left, which led to a Ram rebound and timeout. Tom drained a 20-foot jumper with a few seconds left to seal the victory and was carried off the court by his teammates. The Journal-News reported, "Mr. Lawson made like the U.S. Cavalry" to lead his team to victory. This buzzer beater against Nyack secured yet another Clarkstown

league championship. Tom was selected as All-County honorable mention behind Ram first-teamers Jim Malfetti (who was Rockland Player of the Year) and Bryan Hassett, as well as second-teamer Charlie Holbrook. In some people's estimation, the 1965-66 Clarkstown team was one of the best in school and Rockland history.

Tom's least recognized great sports accomplishments were in track & field. He himself didn't dwell on his significant achievements in that sport. However, he was the 1965 Rockland County meet champion in the shot put and an All-County selection as a junior in the shot put. In his senior season he had multiple dual-meet wins in the shot put and discus. On April 21, 1966 he had the County's best throws in the shot put and discus, outdistancing about 24 competitors in dual meets around the county that day. The following week, April 30, came another dual winner day for Tom. Later that year he teamed with teammate Ken Arni to capture the shot put title and set the meet record for the event at the prestigious Rockland County Invitational Relays, which was the precursor to the Nanuet Relays. He was an All-County selection in the discus as well. Again, as in the football season, Tom Lawson was the leading scorer for the Clarkstown track team.

In June of 1966 he was selected, along with Bryan Hassett, as the Most Outstanding Athletes in Clarkstown High School for the 1965-66 school year. A good student as well as an outstanding athlete, Tom received a scholarship to the University of Notre Dame.

His years with the Fighting Irish started out with a bang in '66 with a 10-10 tie between No.1 Notre Dame and No.2 Michigan State, which brought the eventual national championship to South Bend that year. Other highlights included playing against Army at Yankee Stadium, and being the starting tight end for quarterback Joe Theismann in what was billed as the

national championship game against No.1 Texas in the 1970 Cotton Bowl.

After graduating from Notre Dame with a BA in Economics, he was an NFL fourth-round pick of the Chicago Bears. The selection was nullified due to the fact Tom had remaining collegiate eligibility. He then was chosen by the Baltimore Colts as the third pick in the first round of the supplemental draft, as an offensive tackle. He also played offensive tackle for the New York Jets. Tom's stints with both the Colts and Jets were short before a recurring shoulder injury forced him to give up his football career. He did not appear in any regular-season NFL games. Memorable events include being in the huddle with NFL Hall of Famer John Unitas, trying to block Ben Davidson in the Oakland Coliseum, practicing against Bubba Smith, and playing in Shea Stadium with Joe Namath.

In summary, Tom earned seven varsity letters in football, basketball, baseball and track. He played on three County championship teams combined in football and basketball. He was a unanimous first-team All-County football selection in 1965 and made All-County in track, being the County meet champ in 1965 and earning All-County in the discus in 1966. He also was Rockland County Invitational Relays meet champ in the shot put. Tom was voted as Most Athletic in his high school senior class. He was inducted into the Clarkstown North Hall of Fame in 2001.

Tom was a magnet for Division I college coaches. Why? Well, for starters, his size in high school as a 6-foot-5, 240-pound tight end, which was huge in the 1960s, and basketball guard, practically unheard-of dimensions for a backcourt hoops player. He also drew coaches' attention because of his athletic skills and versatility. He earned a football scholarship to Notre Dame, considered the premier college program in the nation at that time. He has been credited and praised by numerous Rockland County coaches and athletic directors as "the first big-time athlete" who opened the door for many athletes after him to be recruited by college coaches who had previously passed over athletes from Rockland County, which is New York State's smallest county geographically outside of NYC's five boroughs.

Professionally, Tom worked in sporting goods sales with Joe Lombardi, the brother of Hall of Fame Coach Vince Lombardi. An entrepreneur in spirit, he developed a wide scope of skill sets in sales, marketing and product development. He is listed as inventor or co-inventor on more than 20 U.S. utility and design patents.

Tom married former Clarkstown cheerleader Penny Alexander and has loved and "tormented" her for the past 51 years. They have been blessed with four children and five grandchildren.

Tom's brother Bobby Lawson was inducted into the Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame in 2018.



Congratulations, Tom!

EMIL WILLIS

SPRING VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

CLASS OF 1952

For the first time in Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame history, two members of the same family will be inducted together. Emil and Bob Willis, from Spring Valley High School, are hall of fame legacies. Their father, Emil Willis Sr., a 1932 Spring Valley graduate, was inducted into the Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame in 1980. Bob, Emil Jr., and Emil Sr. along with his wife, Henrietta, are all members of the Spring Valley Sports Hall of Fame. Emil Jr. was also inducted into the Rockland Community College Sports Hall of Fame in 2013. Tonight's induction of Emil Jr. and brother Bob marks the culmination of a family's contribution to the world of education and sports in Rockland County.

Emil Willis Jr.

Athlete, Coach, Administrator

Emil Willis Jr. played football, basketball and baseball for the Spring Valley Tigers before graduating in 1952. While at Spring Valley, Emil was named to several All-County teams, most notably during his senior season when he was selected to the first team All-County basketball and second team All-County baseball squads.

He started at Springfield College, joined the Army and served our country from 1953 to 1955, and then returned to Springfield to complete his degree in physical education, graduating in 1958. Emil played



baseball and basketball at Springfield. After college Emil's first coaching job was at Penacook, N.H. where, in his first season, the basketball team won the Central New Hampshire School title (14-5) and in baseball took the state team title with a 15-2 record. It was a complete transition for the school's programs.

Upon completing his master's degree at Seton Hall, Emil was hired in 1960 at Spring Valley High School as a physical education teacher and coach. Emil coached a variety of sports at Spring Valley but was most known as the varsity baseball coach. His best team was the 1967 Rockland County and Section 9 championship baseball team. In 1970 after coaching baseball at Spring Valley and Ramapo, Emil took a coaching job at RCC. At RCC he started right off with a Mid-Hudson Conference baseball championship title in 1970 and 1971. He was named the Mid-Hudson Conference Baseball Coach of the Year in 1970 and again in 1971. Emil also coached the RCC bowling teams to great success, guiding numerous squads and individuals to the NJCAA national tournament. The college team's successes certainly were memorable occasions but the undefeated baseball season with the 1967 Spring Valley

Tigers was the best of them all. "My most memorable thought of that year was the final game for the Section 9 championship against Newburgh," Emil stated. The Tigers finished the PSAL season 14-0 behind the pitching of Fred Fabbri and Rich Raff, each recording 7-0 records. "We were behind 2-0 and came back to win the game 3-2, as Tony Herdermian scored on a squeeze bunt to win the game," Emil recalled.

The RCC Story: Just Call Him Professor Willis

Being a faculty member at RCC starting in 1969, Emil became a full professor in 1990. He was chairman of the Physical Education department from 1982-2010. Aside from coaching, Professor Emil Willis left an indelible mark on RCC and the youth of Rockland County. He founded the RCC

Summer Sports Academy, which many youngsters throughout the county attended. Professor Willis was also instrumental in the development of the RCC Kids College, which was an alternative youth summer program featuring art, computer technology, theater and science. In addition, Emil created, developed and directed the Baker Camp Program, which gave RCC students the opportunity to take physical education classes at Baker Camp on Lake Sebago in Harriman State Park. Courses included sailing, kayaking and orienteering.

Emil is retired now and still lives in Suffern. He has three sons; Jeff, Jim, and Eric, and one wonderful daughter, Kerry, his primary caregiver. In prior years Emil enjoyed working out at the St. Lawrence Center in Hillburn and socializing with friends at Dunkin' Donuts.



*Congratulations,
Emil*

BOB WILLIS

SPRING VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

CLASS OF 1959

Bob Willis:

A Major League Opportunity

While older brother Emil was away at college, younger brother Bob was making a name for himself on the fields and courts of Rockland County. Bob was a three-sport standout for the Spring Valley Tigers throughout his high school career. He was a starter on the basketball team, but it was outside on the gridiron and baseball diamond that Bob excelled like no other athlete during that time. Bob was a three-year starter at quarterback on the Spring Valley football team, coached by Ed Stanczyk, and was selected to the Rockland All-County team at that position twice. In addition, Bob was also an outstanding punter for the Tigers. But it was his first love, baseball, that brought Bob the most recognition. An all-around player, Bob earned four varsity letters playing baseball. His primary position was pitcher and Bob, a right-hander, was selected to the All-County team twice at that position. Throughout his high school career Bob averaged 10 strikeouts per game pitched against all opponents. His coach in baseball was Jim Depasquale.

After beating Nyack for the league championship, Bob's ability so impressed Nyack baseball coach Frank Nelson that Nelson took Bob and his father to Philadelphia for a tryout with the Phillies. Bob was given a



uniform by Manager Gene Mauch and told to warm up. According to Sam Basson, a Journal-News sports reporter who accompanied the group to the tryout, "Bobby was fast but a trifle high. Mauch sent five batters to face Willis. After the workout nothing was said except for a handshake between Mauch and the Willis's and Manager Gene Mauch walked away. Coach Nelson then informed everyone that the Phillies made an offer of \$5,000.00 signing bonus and \$500.00 a month for Bobby to sign with the team." During that same time Johnny Murphy of the New York Mets was also trying to entice Bob to sign with them, dangling a contract worth \$30,000. In the end, it was dad, Emil Sr., who helped Bob wisely decide to complete his education first and then if the opportunity was still there after college they would revisit it. "My mom and dad both grew up during the Great Depression," Bob said. "For them to turn down a contract with more money than they could have ever imagined left a great impression on me. The value of education to them was priceless!"

A College Diamond Dandy

Bob followed in his brother Emil's footsteps and chose to attend Springfield College

as a physical education major after graduating from high school in 1959. While at Springfield Bob chose to concentrate on baseball and again had an outstanding career. He was the first player to hit a home run over the 420-foot left-field fence at Springfield's Berry Field, and struck out 10 or more batters in a game numerous times. As a sophomore he was the No. 1 pitcher on the team, compiling a 5-1 record, and was named the starter in the first round of the NCAA District I playoffs. In 1962 Bob was selected "Little All-American" as the No. 1 pitcher on that team. During the summers while in college he kept his skills sharp pitching for the semipro Spring Valley Bengals along with fellow Hall of Famer Steve Drummond. The two of them were a formidable force who led the Bengals to the league championship. Bob later played for the Emerson-Westwood Merchants and the New York Yankees Rookies in the off-season.

Making His Mark in Education

After graduating from college, Bob was offered a job as a physical education teacher, assistant varsity football coach and freshman baseball coach by Ed Stanczyk, the athletic director at Spring Valley. Forgoing a chance to again try out for a professional baseball team, Bob took the job, settled down and married his sweetheart Judy Komar and they started a life together in Spring Valley. While Emil Jr. chose to stay in Rockland County and spend his career coaching and teaching at Spring Valley and RCC, Bob moved up the education ladder from coach and teacher to administrator and eventually to superintendent of schools in the Midwest. He received his master's degree from Seton Hall University in 1967 and his doctoral degree in educational administration from the University of Minnesota. Bob taught in Minnesota for a while and then rose to become superintendent of schools in

Braham, Minn., a position he held for seven years. He then held superintendent positions in Watertown, S.D. (two years), Rock Island, Ill. (six years) and Des Plaines, Ill. (11 years), before serving as "interim" superintendent for four districts in Rockford, Ill., over a two-year period. He received a "Break the Mold" award from the Illinois State Board of Education in 2003 for innovative practices in improving schools, and earned the Outstanding Community Leadership Award from the Rockford YMCA in 2013.

When asked if he ever regretted his decision to leave baseball behind and pursue a career in education, Bob replied, "Judy and I have talked about it over the years but we've come to the conclusion that our current life was so good, it's unimaginable that it could have been any better had I played professional baseball. We have been truly blessed during our 58 years of marriage."

A Nod to Family Support

Bob cites his family as his inspiration. "My entire youth was dedicated to baseball and football from the time I was old enough to handle a football and a glove," he said. "All those years in organized sports taught me teamwork, discipline and character that served me well throughout my lifetime of serving communities as a superintendent of schools. I want to thank big brother Emil Jr., my mother Henrietta and my father Emil Sr. for constantly encouraging me to reach well beyond what I thought was my ability."

Bob remembers walking with Emil Jr. to the old Spring Valley High School on South Madison Avenue in the winter, shoveling snow off the tennis courts to be able to shoot baskets. He would stand near the basket, get the rebound and pass the ball back to Emil so he could shoot again. "My brother was always my idol in anything I did," Bob said. "I hung on him

like a bad rash. In retrospect, I know I was a bother to him but he never said anything to discourage me.”

Bob’s parents also played major roles in his athletic and personal development. His dad, the custodian at Spring Valley High School, was on the sideline encouraging Bob at all of his games. He also taught Bob how to run and punt on the football field. Bob’s mom was in the stands at every game also. At home, she would hit him ground balls on their front lawn to help improve his fielding skills in baseball. “They were wonderful, loving and supportive parents,” Bob said. “I was so lucky to grow up in Spring Valley in the fifties.”

Bob, who is 78, and Judy have been married 58 years and currently reside in LaValle, Wis. They have three grown children: Robert Willis Jr., a retired lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps; Jennifer Gori, who works in family counseling; and Ryan Willis, a technology manager for a Minneapolis firm. All three children have two children of their own: Robert Jr. – Robert III and Jaclyn; Jennifer – Sophia and Olivia; Ryan – Benjamin, age 11, and Theresa, 8.

These days Bob spends his time enjoying reading, landscaping and traveling with Judy.



*Congratulations,
Bob*



CLARKSTOWN NORTH



Congratulates

TOM LAWSON

CLARKSTOWN CLASS OF 1966

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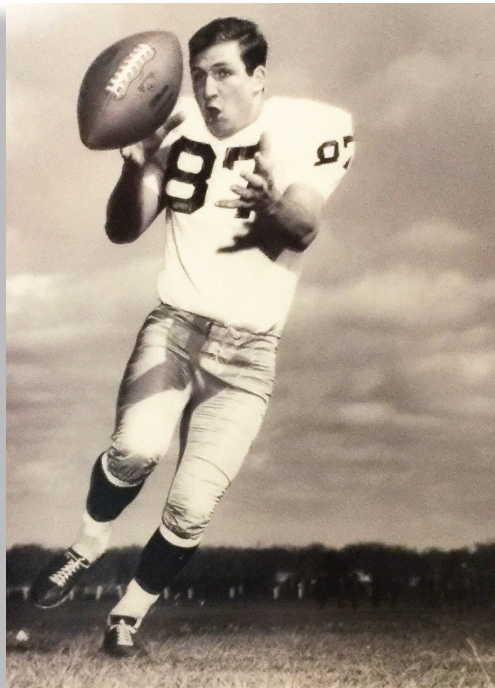
Congratulations

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**TEAM - 1971 NORTH ROCKLAND FOOTBALL
VETERANS BOB WILLIS AND EMIL WILLIS**

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Tom Lawson, Notre Dame Football Program

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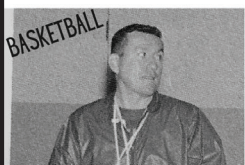
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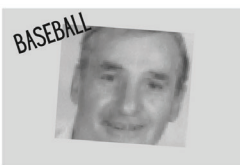
*You taught me
determination and you
gave me the skills to
persist in life's game. For
that I always will give
thanks to you and look
back and remember that I
had the privilege of
calling you "COACH".*



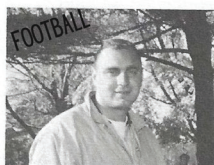
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BOB WILLIS

SPRING VALLEY 1959, BASEBALL STANDOUT, EDUCATION LEADER

EMIL WILLIS

SPRING VALLEY 1952, OUTSTANDING ATHLETE, & COACH, EDUCATOR

1971 NORTH ROCKLAND FOOTBALL TEAM

Best Wishes.

Conklin Scholarship Fund Inc.

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1971
NORTH ROCKLAND
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Bob Willis – SVHS Baseball Star, Education Pacesetter

Tom Lawson – Clarks. North 4-Sport Ace, Notre Dame Grid

1971 North Rockland Football – 9-0, 308 points scored

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Proceeds will help fund a return to the playing field for **Touching Bases Baseball of Rockland**, which allows adults with disabilities to enjoy America's pastime in a safe, supportive, and fun atmosphere.

The league was founded by Bob Baird in 2002 and quickly grew to as many as 15 teams with 220 players, ages 21 to 92. After skipping 2020 because of the COVID pandemic, Touching Bases hopes to resume play this fall and celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2022.





ENSHRINEMENT REQUIREMENTS

The Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame was established to honor outstanding sportsmen and sportswomen, living and deceased, who have gained prominence while residing or competing in, or have brought recognition to Rockland County. To be considered for nomination to the Hall of Fame, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- A. Attain prominence in sports as an athlete, coach, manager, official, owner, writer, broadcaster or supporter.
- B. Reside or have resided in Rockland County, competed here at the time of their prominence, or brought fame to Rockland County as a result of their accomplishments.
- C. Be a person of integrity and good character.
- D. Candidates cannot be considered until 10 years after their high school class graduation, except in special cases.

Our committee encourages the public to send athletic resumes/nominations of prospective candidates to Screening Committee chairman Bob Veltidi, 35 Van Orden Avenue, Suffern, NY 10901. Nominees are reviewed by this committee and, if accepted, voted upon for enshrinement by the committee as a whole.

The Hall of Fame Committee holds monthly meetings the first Tuesday of the month from October to May. Anyone wishing to join the organization should write to Chairman Pete Scheibner, 1 Captain McGovern Drive, Stony Point, N.Y. 10980, or e-mail him at scheibnp@msn.com.

Each inductee in the Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame receives a commemorative trophy and is further honored with an individual plaque, which is given to the inductee's high school for public display.

The Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame is more than awards and trophies and dinners, however. It is really about people – Rockland County people who have had an impact in the world of sports. A total of 276 such individuals have been honored since the hall's inception in 1974.

The Hall of Fame has evolved from those early beginnings to become a recognized presence in Rockland County athletics. In addition to its annual dinner, where it honors new inductees, the hall makes sizable donations to worthwhile local organizations and charities. Included among these donations have been cash gifts to:

- ARC • Varsity Athletes Against Substance Abuse • Salvation Army
- Haverstraw Little League Save the Fields Fund • American Cancer Society • Special Olympics
- Venture • Big Brothers-Big Sisters • Challenger Little League
- YMCA Youth Programs • Homes for Heroes

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ROCKLAND COUNTY SPORTS HALL OF FAME NOMINATION FORM

Nominee: _____
(Last) (First) (M)

Current Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Date Submitted: _____

* If deceased, please give name, address and phone number of family member.

H.S. and Year of Graduation: _____

College and Year of Graduation: _____

On a separate typewritten page, list all of the significant accomplishments of the nominee, both as a Rockland County resident and otherwise. Please be as specific as possible. Include varsity sports played in high school and college, dates, letters earned, honors won, records set, post-collegiate achievements, etc.

* Please submit a clear black-and-white or color photo of the nominee.

Nominating Person:

Last name: _____ First: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Please Submit to:

Bob Veltidi
Chairman, Selection Committee
Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame
35 Van Orden Avenue
Suffern, NY 10901



ROCKLAND COUNTY SPORTS HALL OF FAME NIGHT SATURDAY, AUGUST 14, 2021 – 6:30 PM

New Jersey Jackals vs. Boulders

Proceeds will help fund a return to the playing field for Touching Bases Baseball of Rockland, which allows adults with disabilities to enjoy America's pastime in a safe, supportive, and fun atmosphere. The league was founded by Bob Baird in 2002 and quickly grew to as many as 15 teams with 220 players, ages 21 to 92. After skipping 2020 because of the COVID pandemic, Touching Bases hopes to resume play this fall and celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2022.

RCSHF will be Honoring

*Tom Lawson - Clarkstown 1966, Multi-Sport, Notre Dame Football
Bob Willis – Spring Valley 1959, Baseball Standout, Education Leader
Emil Willis – Spring Valley 1952, Outstanding Athlete & Coach, Educator
1971 North Rockland Football Team*

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Saturday April 23, 2022 –6:00 P.M.

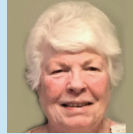
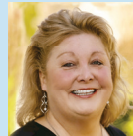
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Will Cunnane – Clarkstown North

Will Eschen – Suffern

Heidi Higgins Sermabekian – Spring Valley

Jose St. Victor – Nyack

Charlie White – Spring Valley

Margaret "Babs" Stead

Joseph Holland Lifetime Achievement Award



Tickets for the dinner are \$65 per person
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201-390-3245, emailing him at riverviewmall@aol.com

If you have any questions,
please call Pete Scheibner, Chairman, at 845-947-3759

Rockland County YMCA

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**Emil Willis Jr. • Bob Willis
Tom Lawson
1971 North Rockland Football**



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ALL THE BEST TO THE ROCKLAND COUNTY SPORTS HALL OF FAME
&
CONGRATULATIONS TO YOUR 2021 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

TOM LAWSON – CLARKSTOWN 1966, MULTI-SPORT, NOTRE DAME FOOTBALL
BOB WILLIS – SPRING VALLEY 1959, BASEBALL STANDOUT, EDUCATION LEADER
EMIL WILLIS – SPRING VALLEY 1952, OUTSTANDING ATHLETE & COACH, EDUCATOR
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