

Fran Rosso Memorial Endowment



Francis Rosso was born in Agawam on March 1, 1921. A gifted athlete, he graduated from Agawam High School in 1938. While in high school, he lettered in football, basketball and baseball. Fran was an All-State pitcher for the Agawam Brownies. He went on to American International College and graduated in 1942.

After college, he signed with the New York Giants Organization as a pitcher. Fran started his professional baseball career with the Springfield Giants double A team. He spent the next six years in professional baseball with the Springfield Giants, San Francisco Seals, Jersey City Giants, and New York Giants. Fran played for the legendary managers Lefty O'Doul and Mel Ott. While in San Francisco, his roommate and best friend was Vince Dimaggio, the brother of Joe Dimaggio. After six professional seasons, he retired from baseball with arm and shoulder problems.

In September 1948, Fran was hired as a physical education teacher at Westfield High School. The following year, he also became the Assistant Coach for football and the Coach of the baseball team at Westfield High School. Fran continued with his own studies while he taught, and he received his M.Ed from Springfield College in 1956. He later earned his Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study, and was only a few courses shy of earning his PhD. In 1957, Fran Rosso was appointed the Supervisor of Health Safety and P.E., and Athletic Director for Middle School and High School in Westfield. He coached Varsity Football from 1949-1957, Varsity Baseball from 1951-1957, Varsity Hockey from 1949-1951, and Freshmen Basketball from 1951-1957. In 1974, he was honored to be named the Massachusetts Athletic Director of the Year.

In addition to his school responsibilities, Fran was very active in the community. He was the Director of Park and Recreation in Agawam for 25 years and was a member of the Agawam Lions Club and Unico. He was also on the School Committee in Agawam for 10 years, and he was the Chairman for 8 of those years.

Fran took up golf seriously around 1960. He worked diligently to improve his skills, and by the mid 1960's, he was a scratch golfer. He won the club championship at Shaker Farms 5 times, along with numerous 4-ball championships with Ron Goldsmith. Fran scored 4 holes-in-one in his career!

Fran was probably the most intense person I have ever known. He was a perfectionist and expected anyone involved with him to live up to his standards. Fran took a keen interest in kids, he inspired loyalty and enthusiasm in his staff, and he was deeply devoted to his family.

In June 1975, Fran suffered a serious stroke that left him partially paralyzed in movement and speech. While in the hospital, he was also diagnosed with non-hodgkins lymphoma. Fran spent 8 weeks in the intensive care unit, came home in a wheelchair, and had to learn how to walk and talk again. He underwent constant physical and speech therapy, and was eventually able to walk with a limp and

regain some of his speech abilities. By September of 1975, Fran was able to return to his job at Westfield High School. He was eventually able to drive again, even though he continued with physical therapy, chemotherapy, and radiation treatment. He fought a valiant battle against his cancer, but it forced him to retire in 1978.

Fran spent the next 2 years in and out of the hospital, and he passed away on January 26, 1980 from respiratory heart failure.

Fran Rosso's spirit and commitment to Westfield students will live on through this memorial scholarship.

Written by: Brian F. Rosso (Son)

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