

Rich Czarnecki

One of the most dynamic midfielders of the 40's and 50's to come out of the Trenton area, Rich Czarnecki represents the roots of soccer in Mercer County and is most deserved of induction into the Hall of Fame.

Like dozens of Soccer Hall of Fame players before him, Rich Czarnecki followed a familiar route to Mercer County soccer immortality. He launched his career on the sandlots of North Trenton, playing for those legendary Olden AA teams at Hetzel Field. He was a four year starter for Coach Dave Weisberg at Trenton High. It was at the club level that Rich's soccer career blossomed. Playing for some of the region's powerhouses, starting as the Philadelphia Americans, who won four ASL League Championships in the 1940's under National Hall of Fame coach Emil Schillinger .

He moved north and joined the Elizabeth Germans in the German American League, joining local standouts and future Hall members Charlie "PingPong" Farrutto and Bill Drake. He later joined a Newark Portuguese squad that was one of the most respected teams in the American Pro Soccer League. In 1953, along with teammate John Pietras, he helped lead the Newark side to the Lewis Cup title.

A year later Rich returned to his roots in Trenton to play for the Olden AA's, teaming up with Hall of Famers Ed Adams," Ping Pong" , Frank "Junie" Black and Walt Cier to lead Olden AA to the New Jersey Cup Championship in 1954. Rich success continued with the Olden AA team that won many Pennsylvania Soccer League Major Division Championships through the 1950's.

Rich was a superb passer who throughout the game ran effortlessly from 18 to 18. He constantly frustrated defenses with his ability to read the play well before it was developed. Upon reflecting on Rich Czarnecki's soccer career, Ping Pong stated "Richie was the best halfback he's ever seen to come out of the Trenton area."

In recognition of his outstanding career, we welcome Rich Czarnecki to the Mercer County Soccer Hall of Fame.