



1973 ST. ANTHONY'S BOYS SOCCER

An undersized midfielder who scaled the heights of college soccer and became an author. A rampaging striker who scored seemingly at will. A coach who instilled a “never say die” mindset into his players. A team who exhibited a combination of determination and toughness to bring home the school’s first state championship. The 1973 St. Anthony’s Iron Mikes were all of this and more and we welcome them into the Mercer County Soccer Hall of Fame, Class of 2022.

1973 was a banner year in Mercer County high school soccer and St. Anthony’s certainly were a big part of that history. Led by coach Tony Potenza and assisted by fabled sportswriter and J.V. coach George “O’G” O’Gorman, the team started slowly, beginning the season with a 3-5-1 record before ripping off nine consecutive wins on their way to a Parochial A state title. The one tie was a still-remembered 0-0 match against fellow inductees Steinert, which provided a much-needed spark. Wins over Princeton and Notre Dame to avenge previous defeats helped the squad on their way to the state tournament. Having to qualify on the cutoff day with a hard-fought win over Hightstown, the competition in Mercer County more than prepared the Kuser Avenue team for the opposition on the state level.

Rampaging through their opponents in the state tournament, the Iron Mikes handily defeated Holy Cross 7-3, while their next task was a resounding victory over defending state champs, St. Joe’s-Metuchen, 4-0. The final saw the team repeat the 4-0 score to defeat Union Catholic to bring home their initial and only state championship. It was a team that didn’t rely on one or two players, but who gave a total team effort whenever they were on the field. There wasn’t a winning tradition in their past, but they proved what hard work and commitment could reap.

Anchored by All-State selection Billy Gazonas in midfield, his work effort and zeal for improvement led him to Hartwick College, where his leadership led him to guiding the Hawks to a national championship as well as winning the Hermann Trophy in 1977 as the national college player of the year while on his way to a professional career. Dennis Kinnevy was, simply put, a scoring machine, netting 33 times, a county scoring record that held up for almost 40 years. This included eight in one game against Delaware Valley while he also earned All-State honors before success in college and returning to play for some of the strongest local club teams with Gazonas.

But it wasn't just the two who brought success to Potenza's team. Keepers Frank Bennett and Mike "Max" Magee kept the opponents at bay, while the defense, anchored by Lew "Big Foot" Chiarmonti at sweeper, backs Dan "The Six Million Dollar Man" McDonald, Mark Pelletteri, Frank Hudik, Frank Santini and Lou Cosma, started the attack from the rear. Midfielders Gazonas, first-year player JoJo Tuccillo, and Mike Gerstnicker were the playmakers while the front line was led by Kinnevy, Walt Schleher, Juan Hauser, and Jerry Hustak. Benny Lee, Tony Astore, Jim Palmere and Herb Muller all made important contributions on the run to the state title.

In the almost 50 years since their championship, lifetime friendships and memories bring them here tonight to celebrate their accomplishments both on and off of the field. We are honored to induct the 1973 St. Anthony's Boys Soccer team into the Mercer County Soccer Hall of Fame, Class of 2022.