

JOE LaDOW

Growing up in Bedford in the early '60s, Joe LaDow and his pals "lived at the Center Playground. We played kickball and baseball – Tony Conigliaro was my baseball hero. As a young kid I looked up to all the high school athletes."

"We used to live for Saturday morning gyms at the high school," Joe related. "Varsity athletes of those days would be the mentors. I grew up around those guys." In sixth grade he served as what they used to call a water boy for the freshman football team. In seventh grade he was team manager for varsity hockey. "So I was around all these athletes, and they pointed me in the right direction."

As teenagers, they played pickup football games on the asphalt behind the Mead Block on Shawsheen Avenue. "Ed Ricker (the police officer) used to watch us, and one day someone was with him. It was Armand Sabourin. Eddie told me to go out for high school football the following Monday."

Joe was a starting wide receiver as a sophomore for Hall of Fame Coach Sabourin's very first Buccaneer team in 1969. He was a Dual County League football all-star as a junior and senior, and a senior captain.

In basketball as a junior, he joined Joe Dooley, Howie Emerson, Gary Sethares and Jim LeMay as a starting five that enjoyed one of the most successful seasons since the school opened 15 years earlier. "We went 13-7; my dream was to go to the Tech Tourney." However, the Bucs missed by one win -- in the 1970s, tourney qualifiers had to win at least 70 percent of their regular season games. As a senior he led the team in scoring.

Dooley '72 has many fond memories of Joe LaDow '71 as a Bedford High School athlete, particularly in basketball, as they were co-captains of the 1970-71 team. "He was best man at my wedding," Joe LaDow noted.

After finishing high school, Joe enrolled at Bridgton Academy in Maine, where he was named the first full-time game captain in 30 years. He and Kelly Elias '73 traveled to the University of Massachusetts with Coach Sabourin for an interview with Coach Dick McPherson.

But Joe said his ultimate dream was to serve as a firefighter, following in the footsteps of "all my uncles." He joined the force in the 1970s, and retired last year. Joe also served as an assistant freshman football coach at BHS. "Those coaches were all great guys," he declared "And as I've told him several times, Armand was my second dad." He also remembers fondly years of action at Page Field in the Bedford Men's Softball League.

"It was later in life that Joe really made a difference in the Town of Bedford," Dooley stressed. "He became a member of the Fire Department in the late 1970s and was qualified as an emergency medical technician. His lifesaving skills helped many a Bedford resident, in a quiet, professional and dignified way. I know personally that he saved many lives."

“Joe was a role model for many aspiring BHS athletes, providing them pointers on how to be better football players,” including Hall of Fame members Steve Wood '72, Elias '74, and Mike Genetti '80, said Dooley, who is also in the Hall.

Joe LaDow retired to Falmouth; he has two sons and a granddaughter. “It’s such a thrill to be remembered,” he exclaimed.