



Tony (left) was inducted into the Catawba Hall of Fame, along with tonight's presenter Don Hanley (second from left) in 1987.

Tony Georgiana:

A part of Altoona High, Catawba football lore

by John Hartsock

After coaching either football or baseball for 20 years at three Delaware high schools, and planting the seeds for the professional sports career of three athletes, it might be expected that Altoona native Tony Georgiana has missed the schoolboy athletic scene since his retirement from coaching in 1974.

Georgiana, however, made enough of the opportunity not to have any regrets upon retirement.

"I enjoyed it while I was doing it, but once I quit, I never missed (coaching) too much," said Georgiana, who has been retired as a teacher since 1983 and now lives in Newark, Del. "I had a lot of it, and I think that you reach the saturation point. I'm not even much of a fan anymore."

Georgiana may not be much of a fan, but he made his niche as a coach. "During his days as a baseball coach at Lewes High School near Rehoboth Beach,

Georgiana helped cultivate the pitching careers of Chris Short and Johnny Morris, a pair of left-handers who would later go on to major-league prominence with the Philadelphia Phillies.

Much later, as a backfield coach for four years at McKean High School in the early 1970s, Georgiana tutored a promising fullback-linebacker named Randy White, who has since become an All-Pro defensive tackle with the Dallas Cowboys.

"I first met Chris Short when he was in the eighth grade," Georgiana said of the pitcher who would record 135 career wins, including 133 with the Phillies. "I taught him how to pitch. Chris was one of the most dedicated persons I've ever seen. He played football, basketball and baseball at Lewes. He was an outstanding pitcher. I remember the day when Jocko Collins, one of the head scouts for the Phillies, stood behind the backstop and watched Chris pitch. Jocko told me that Chris 'couldn't throw a straight ball. Everything he throws, moves.' Chris was only a junior in high school then."

Morris' raw athletic ability was an eye-opener.

"When Chris Short was a senior, Johnny Morris was just in the eighth grade," said Georgiana, a World War II veteran who taught phys. ed. and coached football at Delaware High near Wilmington between his tenures at Lewes and McKean. "Johnny made All-State in both football and baseball. He was one of the best athletes I've ever coached, and he signed with the Phillies for \$40,000. He was a left-handed relief pitcher, and he and Chris were both with the Phillies in the mid 1960s.

Randy White had a lot of filling out to do after he left high school, but showed earmarks of the greatness that he has since established in a spectacular NFL career with Dallas.

"Randy was tough, and it was no surprise to me that he made it (in the NFL)," said Georgiana, who coached Lewes High School to undefeated (11-0) football seasons in both 1949 and 1951. "In high school, Randy stood 6-4 and weighed 210 pounds. He played fullback and linebacker. We did not have a good team, but you could see Randy making tackles all over the field as a linebacker. He had a compassionate nature about him then. He'd let up on the smaller ball-carriers, but he'd really go after and cream the bigger guys. He went on to (the University of) Maryland, and he got real big down there, 255 pounds. They eventually made him a defensive tackle, and he won the Outland Trophy (given to college football's outstanding lineman.)"

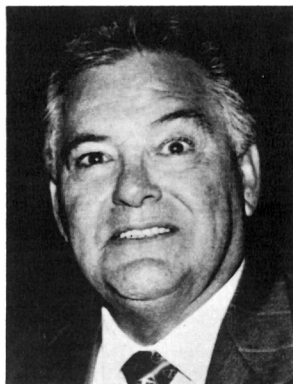
Georgiana himself has precious school-boy roots at Altoona High. He graduated from Altoona in 1939, along with his wife,

the former Elanor Mentzer. They are the parents of two grown daughters.

Georgiana was an outstanding halfback who won the coveted Blanket Award as an Altoona senior in 1938. Many years later, his nephews, John and Marty, would win the Blanket as football standouts at Bishop Guilfoyle.

"In my junior year, (1937), we were 11-0," said Georgiana. "I remember the

TONY GEORGIANA



Age: 73

Sport: Football.

High School: Altoona Area.

College: Catawba.

Hall of Fame Achievement:
Little All-American selection in 1946 at Catawba; nation's fifth leading scorer as freshman in 1942.

Current Occupation: Retired as teacher/coach from Lewes (Del.) High School.

Current Residence: Newark, Del.

Johnstown game that year over in Johnstown. (The late) Steve Lach threw me a touchdown pass from his fullback position. Then I ran back a kickoff in the second half 85 yards for a touchdown, and that more or less cemented the win for us."

Georgiana's senior year also brought special memories. There was the Blanket Award, and a chance for Georgiana to play alongside his brother, Joe, in the Altoona backfield.

"We were playing at Lewistown, and Joe entered the game in the first quarter,

after another one of our running backs got hurt," said Georgiana. "Joe played right halfback, I played left halfback, and we got to play the entire game together for the first time. We won, 20-12, and playing with my brother was my fondest memory as a football player at Altoona High."

Other great memories included Georgiana's friendship with Earl Strohm, who would later establish a special legacy as the Altoona High football coach.

"We were neighbors, we graduated in the same class, and Earl played tackle in our senior year," said Georgiana. "He talked me into going out for football in junior high, and we both played on an undefeated team at Keith as ninth graders."

Georgiana also treasures his alliance with the late Dick Bartholomew, who was then Altoona High's track and field coach.

"I first met Dick when he was the trainer for the football team," said Georgiana. "He was a great guy, and it was because of Dick that I went out for track instead of baseball at Altoona. I pole vaulted 12 feet with a bamboo stick, and the world record back then was only 14-6."

After a fruitful football career at Catawba University in North Carolina, Georgiana, who was inducted into the Catawba Hall of Fame in 1987, embarked on a equally fruitful 38-year career as a phys. ed. and drivers ed. teacher in the Delaware high school system.

"I do very little now that I'm retired," Georgiana laughed. "I work as a marshal at a golf course near here a couple of days a week. I love retirement. The only thing bad about it is that you're old when you finally get to do it."