

John Russell

Class of 1940 - Football, Hockey & Baseball



Some of the athletes selected for Stoneham High's Athletic Hall of Fame were dominant in one sport, but for John "Jack" Russell, Class of '40, all three seasons were opportunities to shine.

Stoneham's multi-season coach, Howard "Doc" Gordon, spotted Russell's talents early, employing him on the pitcher's mound as a freshman. Russell then became a regular on the football team and hockey team in his sophomore year, while continuing to hurl for the baseball team.

In his junior season Russell both punted and passed for the football team. His "far flung passes", according to The Stoneham Independent, to teammate Bob Bingham secured the title of league-leading scorer for Bingham.

In hockey he continued to be a mainstay and in baseball his strong hitting matched his strong pitching for the Stoneham nine. In his senior season, he "flicked passes through the breezes," according to The Independent, for all three touchdowns in Stoneham's 20-6 defeat of Concord.

For his efforts Russell was named Greater Boston Interscholastic All League in hockey and football, All Scholastic in hockey and graduated with ten varsity letters.

Russell was impressive enough to be offered a scholarship at Dartmouth, but after an ankle injury, followed by four operations, Russell declined. Nevertheless, Russell impressed St. Louis Cardinals scouts at a tryout camp but turned down an offer to sign with them to pursue other avenues.

In 1945 he replaced Doc Gordon as football coach at Stoneham High at the age of 24. Russell was still able to make a living on the ice, going to the Eastern League to play for the New York Rovers, a farm team of the New York Rangers, and the Brooklyn Crescents.

Russell eventually settled in Stoneham with his wife Mary and raised five children: Andrea, Jack Jr., Sharon, Larry and Pamela, until his passing in 1990.