



# **North Hunterdon Lions**

ATHLETIC HALL<sup>of</sup>FAME



## **Inductees – Class of 2020**

### **Athletes:**

**Bob Gaunt (1966) Football/Wrestling**  
**Pam Pedersen (1970) Field Hockey/ Basketball**  
**Alison Jaeger (2007) Lacrosse**  
**Tom Zengel (2010) Baseball**

**Coach: Jason Hawk - Wrestling**

**Contributor: Steve Sozanski (1982)**

**Team: 2001-02 & 2002-03 Wrestling Teams**

## **Inductees – Class of 2021**

### **Athletes:**

**Eric Tomczak (1994) Football/Basketball**  
**Carrie Pierce (1995) Soccer/Basketball**  
**James Dolbier (2004) Baseball**  
**Lana Taylor (2005) Cheerleading**  
**Erik Adolfsson (2007) Golf**

**Coach: Lori Guida – Schuetz**

**Contributor: Brian Eick (1980)**

**Team: 2009-10 Girls Basketball Team**

## ERIK ADOLFSSON '07

Golf? Cynics have sniped it's a lovely way to spoil a good walk.

But look at it another way.... As you walk up to the ball, not only do you consider the yardage, but you need to analyze the lie, wind, slope, moisture on the ground or air, temperature, and so forth. All of this affects how the ball will react off the club. Then you need to figure out what shot you want to hit and how.

An engineer's perspective? That's the view of Erik Adolfsson, the 2007 New Jersey Sectional champion, now in Silicon Valley managing high-level sales of semiconductor chips and still playing as much golf as possible.

He was a 4-year varsity golfer who burst through as a senior, when he swept *every* tournament, including the Group IV, North Section 2 state championship. He was named to the *Star-Ledger* All-State team and crowned the *Easton Express* "Player of the Year."

That year he won the Hunterdon-Warren tourney shooting 73, Hunterdon County with 74, Skyland Conference with 74 and Sectional with 77. He was 22nd (of 140) in the NJSIAA finals, shooting 79. The strength of his game was his ability to drive straight off the tee, not super long but always in the fairway.

"I think the biggest improvement was my mental game on the course," he said in 2007, "so I focused on my shot routine a lot and stayed calm."

In a family of golfers, his dad taught him the game. Starting at age nine, Erik played for nine years at Copper Hill Golf Course, where pro Mike Amorelli, who was in his 90s, "took me under his wing when I was 11 or 12 years old. I wouldn't know how to play golf if it wasn't for him." He aced three hole-in-ones within six months at age 12, the third coming in Costa Rica on Dec. 25, 2001. Merry Christmas!

At Copper Hill in 2007 he shot 67 and was the first to win both the junior and men's club championships in the same season (2005). He was 4-time consecutive club champion (2005-08) and again in 2010. In 2005 he was the NJ Junior Golf Champ for boys 18 and younger.

In Erik's time at North, teams went 8-5 as soph, 7-6-1 as junior and 13-4 in his senior year. He played nearly every day in high school as the seasons allowed.

"I knew that entering every tournament our team had a shot at winning because of Erik's leadership," said Coach Kirk Hissner. "Not only did our team have a good three seasons, Erik had an amazing season his senior year individually, winning every tournament that he played in and being nominated for golfer of the year."

Erik went on to Lafayette College in nearby Easton, Pa. In 2009-10 he helped lead the Leopards to their first Patriot League championship with a 21st place tie. He placed 72nd at the NCAA Regionals with a score of 234.

Erik believes golf can be more than analysis and science, but it takes human qualities, too, like perseverance. "You don't always succeed the first time," he said in college. "It takes a lot of practice and a lot of hard work to be successful at something. It doesn't happen overnight."

## JAMES DOLBIER '04

As a lad, James started playing T-ball, moving up to traveling and all-star teams to the age of 12 and then in a senior league until high school.—the writing on the wall for a future great baseball career.

He started off on the JV team in his freshman year, with a 16-4 record greatly aided by his big bat. James moved right up to varsity as a sophomore, helping the team to a 22-5 record and a fourth consecutive conference championship. He hit .318, scored seven runs and blasted a triple.

His junior year was a good one for the big man and the team—a 21-6 record that included the Central Jersey Group III State championship. James clearly showed he was fully accustomed to varsity ball. He batted .341, knocking in 37 runs and scoring 22 himself. Included in his tally were four doubles, three triples, and six home runs. He was a shoo-in for the All-County, All-Conference, and West Jersey all-star teams.

Saving the best for his final Lion year, James batted a lofty .460 with 27 RBI's, two doubles, six triples, and another six homers and crossed the plate 33 times. Even though the team record was 16-9, it was impossible for the award-granters to miss his exploits. He was, again, All-County, All-Conference, All-West Jersey—and best of all-the-alls, first-team All-State Group III—the first Lion chosen since Hall of Famer Jason Kramer in 1991.

James swung the big bat, knocking in many runs, especially when the chips were down and the team needed scores to pull out victories. But he was also a superb outfielder, a perfectionist on defense and with a “rifle” arm that kept baserunners at bay, not to forget his speed on the bases.

But statistics don't tell the whole story. The Lion field is very large, and he was playing without a fence to blast the ball over. The dean of Hunterdon sportswriters, the late Lowell Snare—himself a Lion Hall of Fame member—noted that on any conference field with fences, five of his triples would easily have been home runs. Defenders had to play the powerful Dolbier deep, and still he had belted those extra-base hits. He was powerful enough to smash a ball over the trees in deep-right field—and did.

Career totals were .385 batting average, 67 RBI's, 62 runs scored, six doubles, 12 triples, 12 home runs. If we needed a baserunner to score, Dolbier was the man we wanted at the plate.

James was awarded a scholarship to Villanova, a Division I school, where he only got better and was the starting right fielder *all four years*. He was one of the most dangerous power hitters, consistently on base and driving in many runs, as well as speedily stealing bases and playing near-perfect defense.

He went out in style—second highest batting average, tops with nine home runs, first with 51 RBI's, selected to the Philly Big 5 team, and many more successes that senior year. The Villanova players and fans would definitely miss “Dolbs” and his all-around great play.

Definitely a force to be reckoned with—as the criminal justice college major is now, as a police officer on the Delaware Township force.

## **BRIAN EICK '80 CONTRIBUTOR**

Very few schools are privileged to have a person like Brian Eick, who has toiled in a labor of love on the sidelines (literally!) of the North football program for more than 45 years.

Student Brian was there to hand out game jerseys and to repair, inventory and account for equipment. He helped QBs warm up. He prepped water and Gatorade coolers. He kept pre-wireless headsets and cords untangled to let coaches roam the sidelines. And on and on.

Many of his duties and “tricks” he learned by working with the late Bob Kornberger '54, who is also in the Hall of Fame.

“Being a manager has helped me to be organized in my own life and to work well with people,” Brian says, “There's always a place on a team for somebody who wants to be a part of a team.”

Brian's connection with the team began even before he entered high school. In eighth grade he asked his father to take him to the high school because he had heard they were looking for help with the football team. He met coaches Don Somma and Fritz Halfacre, and they said they would appreciate his help.

In high school, every gameday Saturday as a manager he arrived early to take a big broom through the fieldhouse, just to make it special. “I have a lot of memories about games, good and bad,” he says. “But the most important thing is everybody had fun. It's an experience I'll always remember.”

In the changing times for Lion football, Brian has been a stalwart, working as a manager for coaches Don Somma, John Smith, George Greiner, John Mattes, Jared Mazzetta, and Kevin Kley. He followed in the footsteps of his brothers who served as managers: Ira '66, Ernie '68, and Frank '71.

Brian's dedication and attentiveness to detail didn't go unnoticed by other coaches. He was asked to be the manager for the wrestling team in his junior and senior years, for the lacrosse team as a junior, and for baseball in senior year.

He tried out for baseball shortstop and made it to the final cut, but remembers Hall of Fame Coach Parker Snare's poster saying “Brian will remain with the team as a manager.” He cherishes a photo of him in the center of the celebratory pile when the Lions beat Hunterdon Central 1-0 for the conference title.

As a worker for the A-V department, in 1978 Brian used the school's video recorder to film wrestling matches, organizing a separate cassette for each wrestler as a learning tool.

Mark Saharic enlisted him to work with the Junior Lions football team in the summer of 2001 as a coach and equipment manager, but a week after 9/11 he was placed on National Guard active duty. He saw no school or junior games that year, but has rarely missed a game since 2002.

With the Junior Lions he duplicated his duties on the high school level, taking care of headsets, equipment, game balls, and hustling water during timeouts.

“Brian loves North Hunterdon with all his heart and is proud of his school,” says Coach Snare. “He has spent countless hours supporting everything North Hunterdon. He bleeds Green and Gold.”

## BOB GAUNT '66

Football fans know how extra-seriously the game is taken in various states of the Union. Young Bob Gaunt got a solid dose of “serious” football in the midget league before his family moved to New Jersey from Pennsylvania.

Lion Hall of Fame member Alan Detwiler states that Bob was way ahead of the level of football we had here when he joined the high school team. Stocky, not very tall, Bob was a ferocious lineman on offense and linebacker on defense.

Freshman Gaunt earned a JV letter on the 4-0 team and moved right up to varsity as a sophomore. He helped the Lions to upset our then-nemesis, Highland Park, in a close, hard-fought battle.

Next season's team won the county championship—which counted for a lot in those days when there were no state-championship games. On offense Bob was mostly the blocking fullback, leading the way for Hall of Fame star Gene Detweiler to set scoring and yardage records.

Senior year was Bob's best as he helped the squad to the county championship and the Delaware River Conference title. His play might be regarded as *ferocious*. Teammate Al Detwiler says, “To incur the wrath of Gaunt on the field was definitely to be avoided!”

Wrestling was Bob's new sport in high school. We may say “new” because he, and others on the freshman team, heard their coach, Harold Vandermark (also in our Hall of Fame) urge them to try out for the wrestling team—which he coached. Bob was a JV letter winner as a freshman in his “secondary” sport.

Bob moved up to the varsity squad in tenth grade, helping the team to a record of 7-2-1, which included a 22-22 tie against perennial power P'burg.

Next season's team was even better and ran up a 10-1 record, losing to Central by one point, but beating mighty P'burg by seven. Bob was instrumental in the team's success and won the silver medal in his weight class in the District 17 tournament. (In those days only the gold medalists could move on to the Regions.)

The 1965-66 team earned a record of 8-3 thanks to what the coach called “great leadership and drive” from the new seniors. Bob rolled through the opposition. And then the school had its best-ever showing in post-season tournaments.

Six grapplers won District titles and four finished in second place, one in third. Bob won the gold, along with Al Detwiler and the late Walt Hudnett, also a Hall of Fame member. Those three went on to take first places in the Region 5 tourney, so we had a trio go into the States.

There Bob took the bronze medal; his good friends both won titles. A superb finale for lads talked into a sport...

Bob then attended and wrestled at NY Maritime Academy, becoming the first freshman ever to win Outstanding Wrestler in the Coast Guard Tournament. Bob was a top grappler and earned the engineering degree he long wanted. He holds a patent in nuclear energy and is author of a book on the universe and gravitation mechanics.

Not to forget—he was also the first coach of brother Dave, two-time (just one point from three-time) State wrestling champion...



## COACH JASON HAWK

Young Jason Hawk began his athletic journey at the tender age of five. He wrestled, played baseball and football through grade school, and was a captain in every sport—a sure sign of leadership. In P'burg High he made the varsity team as a freshman and got to the quarterfinals of the States before losing by only two points, when there were no wrestle-backs.

Over the next three years he won three district and two region titles, placed second (by one point) and fifth in the state tournament, and finished with 101 wins in an era of far fewer matches per year. Next he went 35-2 at Middlesex College and took third in the Junior College Nationals, switched to Rutgers, and in his three years there was three-time team MVP, twice team captain, thrice NCAA qualifier, and twice a quarter-finalist, three times making the Round of Twelve, and had 127 wins.

Back at P'burg High, in all four years as an assistant coach the Stateliners were ranked tops in New Jersey and produced three state champions and three second-place winners. He then brought all his excellent credentials to North Hunterdon.

Here, after a pair of seasons as assistant coach, Jason took over the mats in 2000 and in just his second year at the helm his lads burst into prominence with a 14-4 record and second place in the conference standings.

Next year the Lions beat four tough teams in state tournament competition to win the State Group III championship. In the District tourney four grapplers won titles, with Rick Frondorf going on to win Region and State championships. The *Star-Ledger* named Coach Hawk the District 17 and Region 5 Coach of the Year.

The 2002-2003 season was an improvement in won-loss percentage as the grapplers ran up an 18-2 record. They won the Central Jersey Group III title and came within three points of repeating as State champs—behind P'burg.

The team was ranked fourth in the state coaches poll, and Rick once again moved on to Region and State championships.

Rebuilding time came the following year, the only losing season for Coach Hawk at 5-9. Rebounding next season to 9-4, the Lions took third place in the Sectional tourney. The *Trentonian* newspaper chose Mr. Hawk Coach of the Year.

Another winning season, then a jump to a 14-4 record. Season 2007-2008 produced another fine record, 14-5, and a second-place finish in the Sectionals. Coach Hawk was poised to get his 100<sup>th</sup> win.

And that came at the third match of the season, a 51-9 romp. Less than two weeks later came the school's 600<sup>th</sup> wrestling victory. The team forged a 20-5 record for the year and took second place in the District. Mr. Hawk was once again named District 17 Coach of the Year.

His team next won another Sectional title, and the *Courier-News* picked Mr. Hawk to be the Coach of the Year, a fitting end to his career as head coach. The final count shows an excellent 128 dual-meet wins and 72 percent winning record, including numerous tournament and individual championships.

But that was not the finale to his coaching Lion wrestling, for he voluntarily stayed on to help bring further success as an assistant coach through the 2016 season—and was District 17 Assistant Coach of the Year in 2015.

## ALISON JAEGER '07

Father Jean de Brebeuf, a French Jesuit missionary, watched Huron tribesmen play a game in 1637 in present-day Ontario. He named it *la crosse*, "the stick," in French. The name possibly comes from the French term for field hockey, *le jeu de la crosse*, or the game with the stick. It's worldwide now....

Alison Jaeger's extended family has given North Hunterdon (and Hunterdon Central) some of their finest players of the sport. Ali's younger sister, Caroline, was also a four-year varsity player, a team captain who reached 200 goals for the Lions, and attained All-America status. Her cousin Kathleen played for Central and was also an 800-meter track star who became another gem in college lacrosse.

Girls lacrosse began in 2004 for the Lions, with a record of 3-9, but the last three games saw great improvement and only five points from being wins. Alison was the lone freshman on varsity, showing the future when she sprinted downfield, eluded several defenders, and scored the winning goal for the first win of the season.

In her sophomore season Alison helped the team to a 10-8 record, playing so well that she was picked not only to the Skyland Conference first team, but likewise for the Central Jersey Women's Lacrosse League first team. And she was a major factor in getting the team into our first Sectional game, a mere one-point loss.

Year 2006 saw the Lady Lions sharing the Raritan Division league title with a record of 11-6 and Alison again first-team in the conference, the team again making the Sectional tourney.

In only the fourth year for the team, the girls were conference co-champions with an excellent 17-3 record and Sectional runner-up after getting two victories in the tournament. Ali won MVP honors—the Irons Award—and once again made the conference all-star team.

Alison's 77 goals and 63 assists were third-highest in the state. Our all-time scoring leader finished her career with 219 goals and 137 assists.

More, she was first-team *Courier-News* and third-team *Star-Ledger* picks. And she not only made the *Express-Times* first team, Ali was named *E-T* Lacrosse Athlete of the Year for our whole New Jersey-Pennsylvania area. Joining her was Stacy Ditze, *E-T* Coach of the Year. Said Coach Ditze, "Alison has amazing shots on goal, but is also an amazing feeder (assists) and just a great team player in general."

Ali helped other teams to succeed. Before deciding to concentrate on lacrosse and her rigorous program of studies, she played basketball, helping her frosh and JV teams to records of 18-3 and 14-2, respectively. Her talent as a musician placed her on other teams—jazz, marching, and concert bands, all four years.

Ali only got better on the college level, at Division-3 College of New Jersey, where she became the school's all-time scoring leader with 261 goals. She led the teams to a four-year total record of 69-10, was three times All-American, and made the final round in tryouts for the USA national women's team.

Once again having not only played a varsity sport—extremely well—for four years, Ali also entered upon another heavy-duty set of courses in science, attaining her degree in veterinary medicine, and is now a veterinarian in California.

## **CARRIE PIERCE '95**

Defending a goal eight yards wide and eight feet high is a challenging position to play, and not made any easier in the face of fast-charging opponents and a ball coming in at 50 mph—or more. The goalie must be not only courageous, but extremely agile and quick.

Staying alert, being confident, instilling confidence in the other defensive players, organizing the team to meet changing conditions, being prepared to dive bravely at the feet of charging foes, leaping to stop high kicks, and, most of all, keeping the ball out of the net—these and more are the marks of a superior goalie—and Carrie Pierce possessed them all.

Carrie was a three-year starter on the girls soccer team. As a sophomore she helped the team to a 9-5-1 record and the championship of the Hunterdon/Warren tournament.

But in her next season Carrie proved to be a record-setter as the team had its best year since its founding by Hall of Fame coach John Winecker in 1987. The record was 11-5-2, including a second consecutive Hunterdon/Warren title and second place in the conference.

Carrie set school records for goalie with 176 saves and eight shutouts along the way. Another was least goals allowed in a season, 16, which is less than one per game played—a best-goals-against average of a mere 0.83. She was a shoo-in for first team All-Conference.

Wrapping up her career, the senior did it all again while the team went 10-7-2 and played in two State tourney games. This time she set new records of 226 saves and nine shutouts. She won the Irons Award for team MVP and once again made the conference All-Star first team. Even though the Lions did not achieve great success in the won-lost column, her ability earned attention, and she was named to the All-State second team.

In the winter sports season Carrie turned from that kickable soccer ball to the larger basketball. Once more she was talented enough to be a varsity player for three years. On the freshman team that year under the fine coaching of Tom Hank, she was a major factor in the team's 18-0 season.

Her ability took her right to the varsity as a sophomore under Hall of Fame coach Bill Snyder. The team record of 20-5 included two romps in the State tourney before bowing out. Carrie made the conference second team, and she won the Reebok Above the Rim Tournament MVP Award.

Carrie's play was instrumental in an even better season in her junior year.—a 20-2 record that included a conference championship, plus two wins in the State tourney and second place in the Sectionals. On the individual side, Carrie set school records of 13 assists in one game and 176 for the season. She was first team All-County, All-Conference, and All-West Jersey.

In her final season, the “new” team had an up-and-down season, winning the Easton-Phillipsburg Christmas tourney, but ending with a 17-7 season record. Carrie was Irons Award winner as MVP and once again first team All-County and All-Conference.

And besides all that, Carrie won the Marine Corps Physical Fitness competition in the tri-state area! Truly a versatile and highly skilled athlete, and now an executive leadership coach with Building Champions.



## PAM PEDERSEN SCHMIEG '70

Ah, the 1960s. Yes, there were the Beatles, tie-dyed shirts and anti-war protests, but for our girl athletes it meant limited chances in sports and little spotlight.

Up stepped Pam Pedersen, who became a dominant player on extraordinary teams. She played the only two sports available and earned four field hockey and three basketball varsity letters.

Granted, Pam benefitted from nature *and* nurture. She is the daughter of big-band singer Janey Reid and NH Hall of Fame coach Norman Pedersen. Sister Karen was an All-State Choir selection.

Pam played with high intensity all through school, although plagued by weak knees, which resulted in her first operation in the summer of her soph year.

Field hockey was the fall season sport, and North Hunterdon was a dominant force in those days.

Pam's ability was recognized by coach Dot Owensby, who placed the freshman on the varsity squad. That team was superb, going 11-0 and allowing not one goal during the entire season, while scoring 44 times. Afterward they won the North Jersey Play Day title against teams from a wide area.

Next year, success continued, with Pam switching to left inner, a prime scoring position. The team ran to 10-1-1, with another North Jersey Play Day victory. In 1968, it was one more time with a 10-1-1 ledger.

Coach Owensby and many stalwarts were gone, but the 1969 team still achieved a record of 8-3-2, second place in the conference and another first-place in the annual Play Day.

In the spring — when girls basketball was played — Pam made the JV squad as a freshman and helped the team to a 6-0 record in those days when two players each were on offense or defense only, and two others could move across the center line.

Pam's teams never lost a game (38-0) in her four years, often by romps that saw starters relegated to the bench early.

Pam's soph year found her on the varsity, which earned a second consecutive undefeated season (9-0), surviving a 36-34 mid-season squeaker. She averaged about 17 ppg that year.

As a junior Pam was a scoring machine, averaging 25 points per game, leading the team to nine straight wins by big margins. The year started with a 101-24 rout and ended with a nail biter as the girls won the first Delaware River Conference title. The girls had to rally from a 19-11 deficit after one quarter in what amounted to the championship game versus P'burg Catholic. Pam scored 22 and the defense clamped down in the 55-44 victory.

Future Hall of Fame coach Jean Laskowski was beginning to establish a dynasty as the game transitioned to 5-on-5 in Pam's senior year. Dominance once again, with a 9-0 mark and no game closer than 19. Pam racked up 20-plus points a game.

Pam, more than just a super athlete, was the yearbook's girls sports editor and also class secretary. She easily earned the moniker of Regional's "Miss Athlete" in her yearbook writeup.

She may still have weak knees, but hasn't slowed down. She's riding bikes in the Florida heat in retirement, trying not to miss Zumba sessions several times a week, with an occasional yoga class thrown in.

## COACH LORI GUIDA SCHUETZ

“Rah, Rah!... Hoo-Rah!... Minn-e-so-tah!” Yep, back in 1898, Johnny Campbell initiated the first organized cheer. Since his ground-breaking yell, cheerleading has grown leaps and bounds. An activity that began with all male participants has evolved into a true sport, requiring intense physical skills, strength and athleticism, while still keeping the original purpose of cheerleading: to promote schools and communities.

Lori was a four-year varsity cheerleader, captain and MVP of her cheerleading team at Belvidere High School. While at York College she turned down an offer to cheer for the Baltimore Ravens.

Lori was a coach who led by example. She expected dedication and strong work ethics, and she gave her dedication and strong work ethic in return. Her main goal as a coach was to provide a safe and enjoyable cheerleading experience for students by being certified, experienced and qualified—and she absolutely was. She held certifications from USA Gymnastics, American Association of Cheerleading Coaches, CPR and First Aid, Atlantic Cheer and Dance Judge, Universal Cheerleader Association coach, Power Consulting Coach, and New Jersey Cheer and Dance Coaches Association educational participant.

Coach Guida was head coach for 15 years (21 seasons) at North between 2003 and 2018. Her excellence in leadership won her several awards: 2006 National Coach of the Year (Atlantic Cheer and Dance Association); 2007 New Jersey Coach of the Year; and in 2014 Regional winner of the National High School Spirit of Sport Award by New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association. Her holistic approach to coaching motivated her to lead annual leadership seminars for Skyland Conference cheerleader captains, focusing on positive leadership, responsibility and problem-solving issues.

Lori was more than someone who trained her team. She was a coach who “carried” her student-athletes to success by instilling knowledge, mastery of skills, confidence, character, work ethic and goals. She built an inner “super-power” that led her cheerleaders to believe they could win in competition, serve the community in a positive way, or simply be positive leaders that future North Hunterdon cheerleaders might look up to. She stressed the importance of valuing academics, family and good character, all while setting positively realistic goals for each cheerleader and each team to strive for.

Her teams won the overall Skyland Conference title, five Skyland Divisional titles, an Atlantic Cheer and Dance National Championship (2005), a Contest of Champions National Championship (2007), and ranked in the Finalist round 9 out of 11 times while attending the UCA National High School Cheerleading competition championships in Orlando from 2008-2018!

A dozen senior cheer-athletes became NJCDCA All-State cheerleaders and received scholarships, while more than 20 cheerleaders were selected for Skyland All-Conference Honors. Many of her seniors were recruited and hired by UCA as Staff/Instructors. In 2013 Amanda Neal was National Champion at Cheer Ltd. Nationals, and our Athletic Hall of Fame athlete, Lana Taylor, won the title of National Champion in Tumbling at the Atlantic Cheer and Dance Championships in 2004.

From 2003-2018, over 40 Lions cheered or danced at the college level and received scholarships based upon excellence in cheerleading and in the classroom. Great results from great coaching...

Lori is currently a stay-at-home mom for Ella (9) and Avery (5), but continues to share her enthusiasm for coaching and gymnastics.

## **STEVE SOZANSKI '82 CONTRIBUTOR**

Steve Sozanski listened, sweated and pushed to make himself into a state-caliber wrestler in high school. And for the last 35 years, he's driven from his home and business in Warren County to give back his time and knowledge to help Lion wrestlers embrace the elements of discipline and skills needed to achieve.

He's been part of a Lion program that has roared to the top of state recognition, including a recent State team championship in 2019.

Sozanski worked himself from a fair freshman wrestler to a 28-2 record as a 141-pound senior, when he was an all-DRC selection and placed third in the regions. He contributed a key pin in a 32-31 revenge upset over P'burg as the Lions wrestled to the State team title. He was the team Boyer MVP award winner that year, District champion, and All-Conference.

Steve knows the honor of having his name listed on the champions plaque in the wrestling room and wants others to experience that permanent place in Lion lore. It takes work, he tells them, and he is willing to help by taking on anyone, big or small, in the practice room. His respected Popeye arms help teach the essential element of wrist control. "I love the sport," he says. "I love helping people. I enjoy it."

At North, he also earned two varsity letters in soccer and was all-county first team and all-DRC second team as a senior, when the kickers went 12-5-2. In his junior year, the Lions (10-3-3) were DRC champs and won two state games, before losing a 1-1 tie on corner kicks.

Steve has assisted Lion high school wrestling since 1984, with head coaches Dennis Haughey, Jason Hawk, Tim Flynn and Chris Hrunka. "I respect the coaches a lot," Steve says. "They teach respect and discipline."

He lists working with the "great coaches" he calls "buddies" and "brothers," winning the state championship and other big matches, and watching kids improve every year as his most memorable moments.

His 1982 coach, Fred Pierro, praised Steve's work ethic, knowledge and understanding of the sport. "He was one of these kids who just improved a tremendous amount from his freshman to senior year," Pierro said. "He accomplished a ton, but I wish he could have had one more year."

Pierro said Sozanski as a senior had "unbelievable skills, particularly on his feet." He has a very good understanding of what it takes to improve and knows everybody can improve. In practice, he puts kids in situations that force them to learn."

Joe LaSpada, a state champ at Bernards in 1971, has worked alongside Steve as a coach for 30 years at North. Steve is "giving back to the sport and the school," LaSpada said. "I just love the way he approaches the sport and the athletes, with patience and knowledge. and he has improved quite a few wrestlers. He makes it fun, with no egos."

Steve has also been head coach for a recreation lacrosse team on which his daughter played, as well as an assistant in girls' soccer. He and wife, former Voorhees runner Judy (Volckmann), have two daughters, just-graduated Summer and Ashley, both involved in sports at Warren Hills.

## LANA TAYLOR '05

Just as the sport of cheerleading began its boom into lively and vigorous competitions, along came “Dynamite Taylor,” the tumbler from North Hunterdon, and the first student-athlete from the world of cheerleading to be inducted into the North Hunterdon Athletic Hall of Fame.

Football fans counting her 24 (count 'em!) consecutive back handsprings got just a hint of why this honor is so well deserved for this firecracker who jumped, yelled, tumbled and flipped her way to success.

With her strength & stamina, Lana was a natural jumper, which is probably why she found a spot on the track & field team to do some pole vaulting during the off season from cheerleading. Lana was a four-year Varsity cheerleader at North and, as her Coach Lori Guida declared, was one of “the best of the best.”

Coach Guida described her as “a beautiful, exceptional athlete that made the most difficult gymnastics and stunt skills look easy. She was a natural, inspiring, and humble leader who motivated her teammates to be at their best.”

Lana was instrumental in helping her team earn third place (2004) and first place (2005) in the Battle of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. A dedicated and phenomenal cheerleader, she earned some impressive individual awards, too. In 2004 Lana placed third in the nation in the Individual Cheer Competition at the Battle of the Capitol. At the very same competition, her athleticism fired through once again and she won the championship of the National Tumbling Competition.

Continuing her success, Lana received the United Cheerleaders Association All-American Award for superior technical skills, leadership, and strong personal values. The cheerleaders must have great technique and solid skills, which Lana clearly possessed and displayed.

To round out her high school cheerleading years, she was awarded the Skyland Conference Award, as well as becoming a NJCCA All-State Cheerleader, an award earned only by the best. To top it off, the NJ Booster Club also awarded Lana the 2005 “Lion’s Pride Most Spirited” award.

And “Dynamite” Taylor also had an unsuspected talent—pie-eating! Lana won first place in the NHHS homecoming pie-eating contest, beating out even the best of the football players.

It’s no wonder that this talented senior co-captain was one of the first NHHS cheerleaders to go on to cheer at a Division I school. Lana attended the University of South Carolina, where she received the NCA Collegiate All-American Award, *all 4 years*. She was Co-Captain of the All-Girl Squad in ‘08-’09 and named “College Standout” by American Cheerleader Magazine before graduating with her Bachelor of science degree.

Continuing her education at Oklahoma City University, Lana was part of OCU’s 2013 NCA National Champion Team (All-girl NAIA Champs). Even at the “old” age of 24, she had the opportunity to model for American Cheerleader Magazine in New York, which still brings a smile to her heart. In 2013, Lana left OCU with a bachelor’s degree in nursing.

Lana worked as an ICU nurse, Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation Specialist, but is currently cheering on the Kiddo’s Home Team, with her 3-year old son Edison and 11-month old daughter, Monroe. Lori, her husband Tyler, and the Kiddo’s Home Team live and play in Bentonville, AR.

## ERIC TOMCZAK '94

In the “good old days” Illinois had Red Grange, the “Galloping Ghost,” to lead them to victory on the football field. In the 1990's North Hunterdon had its version of the elusive runner—Eric Tomczak.

The era was not a great one for Lion football in terms of winning seasons. But there were many high spots, and many of them came via the play of Eric Tomczak. After helping his freshman team to a 7-2 record, Eric moved up to varsity ball for a 1-9 team.

In his junior year Eric got the opportunity to be the running back of record—and *record* is the right word! He tied the school record of five touchdowns in one game and set a new record for td's in a season—rushing for 16—and scored 98 points.

Eric rushed for 1412 yards, 6.2 yards per carry, including 280 in one game, and had 1583 yards overall, with 171 on pass receptions. All this on a 3-6 team. No wonder he was the *Courier-News* Offensive Player of the Year.

Back for his final year, Eric once more led the way. “Mr. Consistency” again scored 16 touchdowns and 98 points on the way to our best team season in a too-long stretch, 7-1, and gained 1313 yards, 7.2 per carry—and over 3300 overall yards for his career. Taking the brunt of tacklers aiming to nail him, in 182 carries he lost just one fumble. The *Democrat* line was: “Can you be a legend before you graduate?”

On the basketball court Eric was a mentally tough, intense competitor according to coach Chris Schumann. “He brought his superb athleticism to the game and put forth his best effort every night.” As in all sports, the way to win is to score more points than the opposition, and Eric did his share of scoring.

As a sophomore he averaged over 10 points per game on a 10-12 team. Next year he scored over 14 points for the team that improved to 12-8. And in his final season on a 14-6 team that won the Hunterdon-Warren trophy, Eric hit for 15 points per contest. He had a total of 802 points for his career.

Now that's an excellent sum—but it does not indicate the best part of the story. Eric could have been a 1,000-point scorer, but he never tried to be. Instead, he *wanted* always to guard against the opposing team's best scorer. He relished the challenge and even asked the coach to put him on that player.

“Eric was a lock-down defender who prided himself on shutting down opponents,” says Mr. Schumann. “His defensive-minded attitude both frustrated opponents and inspired his teammates.” In one game a super-scorer got so frustrated by Eric's tenacious defense that he took a swing at Eric—and was tossed from the game, which the Lions went on to win.

We must mention, however, one special shot that Eric made. In the bi-county tournament final against Hunterdon Central, the Lions were ahead in the third quarter but the Red Devils were making a run at us. With time running out in the quarter, Eric made a three-point shot from half-court and killed Central's momentum. A dream shot—and victory—come true...

Lehigh grad Eric now runs—his own engineering company, Landtek Design, in North Carolina.



## TOM ZENGEL '10

“The real deal.”

That's what Hall of Fame coach and player Parker Snare knew he was seeing in freshman Tom Zengel. Tom played in every game for all four years as a Lion. He belted a homer in his very first at-bat and proceeded to rack up a .311 average including five doubles, two triples, and two homers, with eleven RBI's for the season.

Tom came from a highly active sporting family, including championship wrestlers at Hunterdon Central, and his mother, Ellen, nee Bitow, flung the discus, javelin, and shot so well that she preceded him into our Athletic Hall of Fame. Dad Thomas, Sr. provided every opportunity for his son to learn the game.

Tom led the Little League 11- and 12-year-olds in homers and with Cust's Diamond Jacks was MVP of the 16-and-under players in the WWBA National Championships in Marietta, Georgia.

Sophomore year saw a potent Lion lineup that got the team to the sectional championship and second-place in the State for Group 4. Mr. Zengel was instrumental in that great season. He batted .513 on a school-record 58 hits. He broke five school records with 16 doubles and 11 home runs and scored 39 times. He also racked up 31 extra-base hits and 119 total bases. One highlight was tying a school record of three homers in one game. The sophomore was named to the first-team All-State by the *Star-Ledger* and first team by the *Courier-News* and *Express-Times*, as well as for the conference.

Following that great year, the team, minus many graduated fine players, finished at 7-12, failing to make the state playoffs for the first time in 31 years under Coach Snare. Pitchers did their best to avoid his batting prowess, but Tom still batted .442, with four homers and 21 runs batted in and was picked again for the conference first team.

Senior year found him leading the Lions to the conference championship and he was first-team All-Conference again. He set a school record again with a .541 batting average on 46 hits, second only to his own 58-hit record as a soph. His four-year total of 150 hits bested the previous record by 44.

Tom drove in 40 runs, second on the school-record list, and walloped eleven home runs to tie his own record. That gave him career records of 28 homers and 110 RBI—the first in school history to top 100. His 68 extra-base hits and 32 doubles were two more school records, and 90 runs scored is second all time. His .462 career average had to be number one.

Accolades rolled in at season's end. Tom was once again All-State first team in the *Ledger* as well as their All-West Jersey Player of the Year. He was the *Express-Times* player of the year, ditto for the *Democrat*, and first-team for every publication in the area. And he won the Boyer Award as MVP for the third straight year.

At North Carolina Tom helped his team to play in the College World Series in 2011 and 2013 and won the award given to the most dedicated player. He is now an attorney.

Said Coach Snare. “A player like Tommy Zengel comes along once in a coach's lifetime, if he's lucky.”