

Dave Raila



Dave Raila has never met a sport he doesn't like. In fact, there aren't too many sports he hasn't played. The 1972 Norwalk High School graduate has participated in no less than a dozen sports over the years, either competitively or recreationally. Included on that list are the three sports he started in during his three years at NHS.

Raila was a two-year starting goalie in soccer and as a senior was named captain and voted to the All-FCIAC team. As a junior, his first year as a starter, he helped lead the Bears to the West Division title and their first appearance in the conference championship game. Norwalk was the first team other than Brien McMahon or Staples in the first 10 years of the FCIAC to play in the league finals

Raila was also a three-year starting forward on the basketball team and a senior co-captain of Norwalk's 1972 FCIAC championship club. Raila played one of the best all-around games in his scholastic career the night the Bears beat Danbury 61-54 for the crown and he was voted the MVP of the championship game.

It was Norwalk's second league title in basketball and the first since Hall of Famer Calvin Murphy led the 1966 team to top honors. Murphy's brother, Sammy Miller, was the other co-captain on the '72 team with Raila, who was also named to The Hour's 1972 All-City Basketball Team.

The versatile Raila was also a three-year member of NHS track and field team in the spring, competing in the high jump, the high and low hurdles, and the discus.

As a senior, the three-year, three-sport standout was president of the NHS Lettermen Club and voted the "Best Student/Athlete" by the senior class.

During his high school career, Raila had the distinction of playing for three future award-winning coaches. In basketball, he played two seasons for Ed Cerulli and his last season for Don Quinn, both past Norwalk Old Timers honorees, while his coach in both soccer and track was Tom Scarso, a member of the Connecticut High School Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

But Raila's imprint on local sports was apparent long before he arrived at high school. As an 8-year-old, he joined the swim team at the Shore & Country Club and swam for them during the summer from 1962-69, serving as captain his final year.

It was also in 1969 that Raila was named captain of the soccer and basketball teams at Nathan Hale Junior High School, and at the school's annual awards assembly in the spring he received a special award as the Outstanding Athlete/Scholar/Gentleman.

Raila even played one year of JV football his sophomore year at Norwalk High before switching to soccer and becoming the starting goalie the following fall.

After his athletic days at NHS, Raila attended Brown University in Providence, R.I., where he played freshmen basketball and then three years with the varsity in the Ivy League.

Following his graduation in 1976, Raila coached middle school basketball at Mercymount Country Day School in Rhode Island. But in 1978, he returned to Norwalk High School as a science teacher and he also returned to the athletic arena at his alma mater, serving as the freshmen boys basketball coach under the legendary Ray Barry.

Raila was also an assistant coach and eventually head coach of both the NHS boys soccer and boys golf teams, leading the golf team to its first winning season in more than a decade.

In 1981, Raila returned to the basketball court. Not as a player, but as a certified high school official. He has served as the Assistant Rules Interpreter of IAABO Board 9 for the past 25 years, and has been voted to the state tournament referee list for the last 26 seasons.

He has officiated countless state tournament games during his three decades, including two Class LL boys state championship games and one Class L boys state final.

Over the years, Raila has enjoyed several recreational sports, such as golf, sailing, bowling, hiking, running and tennis.

And in 1997, he learned to crew and competed on the Master's level with the Saugatuck Rowing Club, helping them win several national championships.

Raila has also won numerous medals at rowing regattas, including a gold medal at the Master's World Championships in 2006 in a men's 50-and-over event. He also won a gold medal at the U.S. Rowing Master's National Championships in 2007 when he teamed up with his wife to win the 50-and-over mixed double. She is the former Pam Hegedus, who swam for NHS and was later head coach of the girls swim team there. The Railas now reside in Trumbull.

Dave Raila left teaching in 1988 and entered the pharmaceutical industry, but returned as a teacher at Norwalk High School this year. Tonight he returns to his hometown again as a Norwalk Old Timer.