

## *Bob Barate*



**F**or more than three decades, the name Bob Barate has defined excellence on local softball diamonds and touch football fields.

From the mid-1960s through the 1990s, the Norwalk native and lifelong resident was not only one of the best in both sports, but among the city's most fierce and intense competitors.

Barate's athletic career actually started in the fifties when the pitched and played shortstop for the Laurel AC in the American Little League, Seamens in the Norwalk Pony League, and Davey Pharmacy in the Brien McMahon Babe Ruth League.

He also played shortstop at Ben Franklin Junior High School, but elected to work after school instead of playing sports at Norwalk High School.

Barate more than made up for the time away, however. After a five-year hiatus, he returned to the athletic arena in 1964 with the Norwalk Aces, playing softball and basketball with them in Norwalk recreation leagues and the Stamford Shoreline League, and football in the Inter-City Touch Football League.

The Aces ceased playing in the Inter-City League in 1966, but Barate continued with the Darien Sportsmen, who he played with from 1967 to 1996, the league's 35th and final season. During that time, Barate, who played center, end, linebacker and defensive back, helped the Sportsmen win seven league championships, including three in a row from 1974-76.

Barate helped the Sportsmen win another crown in 1984, the same year he was named recipient of the league's All-Timers Award for his outstanding play. He was only the seventh player in league history at the time to receive the prestigious honor.

In softball, the Aces were sponsored by Singewald Buick for several years, but were always referred to as the "Aces" in local softball circles and Barate played infield, outfield and pitched for them from 1964 to 2000, finally retiring because of an eye injury.

In fact, Barate was one of about a half-dozen core players who kept the legendary team going from year to year, and they still exist today. During Barate's years with the team, the Aces won several city and state sectional championships, as well as capture titles in the Norwalk Independent and Hank Aaron softball leagues.

When he wasn't playing with the Aces, Barate would play shortstop in tournaments with the Chatham Oaks, another softball power from Norwalk. He also played softball and basketball for Merchants Bank in the Norwalk Industrial League.

Barate's talents on the softball diamond were recognized in 1982 when he was voted as one of the best softball players of all time in Norwalk in a poll conducted by The Hour Newspaper.

As his own playing career was drawing to a close, Barate began coaching in local youth leagues his children were involved in. In the summer of 1999, he coached the Norwalk Athletic Association Girls 12-and-under softball team to its first state championship, while in 2000 he was an assistant coach with the Norwalk Girls Basketball Association 8th grade travel team that went undefeated in eight tournaments, including the Golden Knights tournament in Massachusetts. He was also an assistant coach with the Stamford Chaos 18-and-under fast-pitch softball team.

In addition, Barate is a past president of the Norwalk Industrial Recreation Council and a member of the Norwalk Umpires Association.

Following his graduation from Norwalk High in 1961, Barate attended the American Institute of Banking and Norwalk Community College, and was employed by the Merchants Bank and Trust Company for 30 years. He also spent 10 years with American Computer Resources, and is currently with C&C Landscaping of Norwalk.

Barate and his wife, the former Lynn Gottlieb, have two daughters, Lindsey, who played field hockey and softball at Brien McMahon, and Marissa, a three-sport athlete at BMHS who was All-FCIAC in field hockey and softball, and a starting guard on the Senators' back to back FCIAC championship girls basketball teams in 2003 and '04. She was also taught how to pitch by her father and graduated as the all-time leader in victories in school history.