

Monroe's Hall of Fame Inductees



photos by Bryan Garde, Blue River Images

Dave Hughes (accepting for Coach Eugene Rice who passed away in 2001), Jeff Epperson, Joe Urso and Don "Chick" Garver were inducted into the Hall of Fame on December 22nd at the boys basketball game.

Jeff Epperson 1968-1971



A standout student athlete Jeff excelled in Wrestling and Football at Monroe High.

In his Sophomore year he earned Varsity letters in Football and Wrestling.

Sophomore Wrestling honors he earned include Most Valuable Player, Most Pins Award, Fastest Pin (18.5 seconds).

Junior year Wrestling honors he earned include Most Valuable Player, Most Take Downs (40), Most Pins Award (20),

Fastest Pin (40 seconds), and Runner-up at District.

He also earned Varsity Football Most Improved Player, and two year pin.

Senior year Wrestling honors earned include Most Valuable Player, Most Take Downs, and Most Pins.

He earned his three year pin for Varsity Football.

Jeff was a tackle on two consecutive undefeated football seasons in 1969 and 1970. He was sought by Division I College Football programs from around the country and eventually accepted a scholarship from Woody Hayes to play for The Ohio State University. After his freshman year at OSU, he made the decision to transfer to Miami University where he could participate in both football and wrestling. At Miami, he was a member of the team that won the Tangerine Bowl Game.

Wrestling was his passion and he pursued his wrestling career in A.A.U. Freestyle Competition while at Miami, winning numerous NCAA heavyweight tournaments and ranking second in the nation. During his wrestling career, Jeff earned over 100 medals and trophies. In 1978 he was the second opponent out of 15,000 wrestlers to beat a brown bear named Victor in a match.

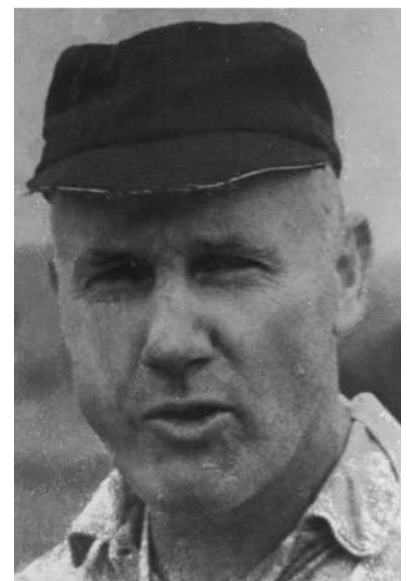
Jeff was a member of the New York Athletic Club and was the second alternate to the 1976 Olympic Wrestling Team. He hoped to earn a spot on the 1980 United States Olympic Wrestling Team but a severe knee injury ended his career.

Eugene "Gene" Rice Football Coach 1965-1979

Coach Rice is the most successful gridiron mentor in Monroe football history. He built a football program that dominated the Mid-Miami League during his tenure at Monroe. He coached the Hornets to their first MML League Championship in 1967.

Coach Rice instilled a winning attitude in all of his players and the Hornets went on to have two consecutive undefeated seasons going 10-0 in 1969 and 1970. The Hornets were ranked #14

in Ohio's Big School Division in 1970. Coach Rice and the



Hornets recorded a winning streak of 23 straight games during late 1968 to 1970 seasons and had 29 wins and only 1 loss over three seasons.

Coach Rice and the Hornets captured 5 MML Championships. He was honored as MML Coach of the Year 5 times and voted Outstanding Coach in Butler County in 1969 and 1970. The Monroe Chamber of Commerce named him Outstanding Citizen in 1970.

During his 15 years at Monroe he had a combined record of 98 wins, 47 losses, and four ties.

The caliber of his coaching skills resulted in many Hornet players receiving scholarships to play football at Ohio State, Michigan, Miami OH and Michigan State.

In 1988 the College Football Hall of Fame, Kings Island, Ohio placed a brick in Coach Rice's honor in the Walk of Champions which honors outstanding high school teams and coaches throughout the United States.

Gene Rice received honors as a player during his high school years in football, basketball and baseball in Gloucester, Ohio. He was a graduate of the University of Dayton.

Don "Chick" Garver 1955-1959



A natural athlete, Don Garver participated in football, basketball, baseball and track.

Freshman year he earned a Varsity letter in Football.

Sophomore year he played JV Basketball and earned Varsity letters in Football and Track

Junior year he earned Varsity letters in Football, Basketball and Track and was named Football's Most Outstanding Back.

Senior year he earned Varsity letters in Foot-

ball, Basketball, Baseball and Track.

He also earned MML All League, Co-Captain and Mr. Touchdown Award, and was honored as a Natural Athlete.

During Dons' athletic career at Monroe he excelled at track setting a record in the 100 yard dash (10.2 seconds) that he held for over 20 years, and a record in the 220 yard at a league meet.

As halfback for the football team he led the team in scoring touchdowns with his sharp cutting and tricky change of speed on the field.

His teammates and coaches were captivated by his speed, vertical jump and natural athleticism!

Joe Urso Baseball Coach 1981-2000

As Monroe Baseball Coach he had an astounding 301 victories, the most by any coach in Monroe baseball history. Joe was voted Coach of the Year when winning the league championships. He coached his teams to 6 MML championships in 1982, '83, '84, '85, '86 and '87.

Joe was instrumental in creating a baseball complex at the high school that was one of the finest baseball diamonds/facilities in all of Ohio.

He put in long hours working the diamond and solicited the community to donate materials and funds needed to build a state of the art complex.

As a 1962 Hamilton Catholic graduate, Joe played football, basketball and baseball. As a player he earned All-Ohio honors in Baseball as a senior. He continued his baseball career as a player for Miami University. As a varsity baseball coach from 1971 to 1980 he guided the Hamilton Taft Tigers to 188 victories including a school record 34 in 1973.

Joe coached Varsity Baseball and Golf for 19 years while at Monroe. He also served as assistant basketball coach for 9 years. When the Monroe community talks of Hornet Baseball they talk of the man that built a successful program named Coach Joe Urso. He taught the boys the game of baseball and shared his passion for the game of baseball with all who had the privilege to be coached by him.

Joe was inducted into the Butler County Sports Hall of Fame in 2005.

