It was an opening trip for the young Shepherd. He knew his grandfather was a fierce athlete because of his lingering limp from old football injuries. He had heard him tell stories of how big his grandfather was when he was playing sports. He still had that aura of a true competitor. The word got out about how good he was...I knew he was a good golfer, but I had no idea how good he was until he saw him celebrated at halftime on New York City field.

He never bragged, but if you asked him about it he’d tell you stories. That was his grandfather—a center, offensive guard, lineman, and kicker on that team—played a crucial role in that victory.

### Hall of Fame

It’s a great honor, and I think he definitely would have appreciated it. Playing sports was such a big part of his life.

Matt Shepherd, grandson of the late Charlie Klemovich

"It’s a great honor, and I think he definitely would have appreciated it. Playing sports was such a big part of his life."

On Columbia’s baseball team, he led the Ivy League in hits as a freshman and averaged over .350 in at least two seasons. He even had a chance to play an extra in “The Babe Ruth Story” where he spent the day shooting with William Bendix to mimic the Babe with the lumb ball.

"He always talked about how he had to do the scene about 30 times. He had to make it look like he was watching the ball go over the fence because that guy could not hit at all," said Shepherd. "They were shooting it in Yankee Stadium, and they wanted to use the kids from Columbia. For the extras, they actually had to use people that could play. They were in New York, so they went and recruited the kids from Columbia."

When college ended, there were three professional football teams that showed interest in the former Southington gridiron star. He was drafted by the Brooklyn Dodgers (All-American Football Conference) and was offered contracts by the Cleveland Browns and the New York Yankees. Klemovich turned them all down to start a family.

"He almost seemed to play it from the back then. The word got out about him. Everyone wanted someone local in be successful, and he was. Everything I ever heard about him was a positive thing," Michanczyk said. "He was a very sports-minded person and very successful. He set himself up in business and did very well. He was probably the best athlete that people and many of the people who really knew him and seen him play did not know was our excellent ball player."

Everything that Klemovich touched seemed to turn to gold. As a boy in the late 1930s, he won the CJ junior golf championships. During his college years, he played baseball for the International Silver Insilcos of Meriden and as a member of the Southington Gems semi-pro football team. His college career was interrupted by a three-year stint with the Army during World War II, and he returned to the Phillies to play baseball in the Pacific Olympics after the war. As an adult, Klemovich returned to golf, earning three golf tournament championships (1977, 1982, and 1994) in Southington’s “Kielbasa Open” that is sponsored by the Southington Falcons.

"He was such a good golfer, but he was always fooling around," said Shepherd. "He went out one time with me and my friend, and here he was, trying to hustle my friend. He’d say things like, ‘Oh, man, I’m an old man. I could never hit the ball like that.’ Then, he’d do it. He was pretty funny like that. I remember looking at the score cards, and he was always at even par or one stroke over, and this was probably about 10 years ago. He was in his late 70s, and he was still hitting par."

In every season, Klemovich held his own. He graduated Lewis High School in 1940. He prepared for a year at Cheshire Academy and went on to play football and baseball at Columbia University. In his college and prep years, Klemovich earned a total of 14 varsity letters as a four-year player on the baseball and football teams. At Columbia, Klemovich broke a pair of kicking records that stood since 1915, and he still holds Columbia’s single-season record for extra point kick attempts (24) that has stood for almost 65 years. In fact, he’s currently ranked third all-time for single-season extra point kick completions with the Lions (23 in 1948).

“You’ve got to remember that, at the time, those teams that were playing in the Ivy League were much better than they have been over the past 10 or 15 years,” said Michanczyk. “They had a lot of great football teams and sports teams.”

On the other hand, Klemovich’s success in sports was so big that the Southington Sports Hall of Fame officials clamored to include him in the Class of 2011. He played multiple sports and multiple positions on almost every team. He was a champion into his 70s in local golf tournaments. Few athletes can match his versatility. “It’s a great honor, and I think he definitely would have appreciated it. Playing sports was such a big part of his life. He loved the camaraderie and being around everybody he could meet and share. ‘I always thought that it was incredible with all the sports that he played. He got into Columbia because of it, and sports really set him up for life.”

Charlie Klemovich was a year-round star with a football career that has stood for almost 65 years. Inducted into Cheshire Academy Sports Hall of Fame (1993). Inducted into the SHS Baseball Hall of Fame (1993).

Grandson of the late Charlie Klemovich

PHOTO COURTESY OF MATT SHEPHERD

**Charlie Klemovich anchored the offensive line of the CHS Academy in 1941 (above) and earned 14 varsity letters at Southington High School and Cheshire Academy in the late 1930s and early 40s.**

**Hall of Fame**

**Soutthington Sports Hall of Fame**

**Inside the Numbers**


- Graduated from Lewis High School (1940) and Cheshire Academy (1941).
- Earned total of 14 varsity letters (golf, hockey, baseball, football).
- Movie extra for “The Babe Ruth Story” (1948).
- Inducted into Cheshire Academy Sports Hall of Fame (1993).
- Inducted into the SHS Baseball Hall of Fame (1993).

**Football**

- Played for Southington Gems (mid-1940s).
- Recruited to Columbia University in New York as a center, offensive guard, lineman, and kicker.
- Earned 4 varsity letters (1941, 46, 47, 48).
- Major factor in “Miracle on Morningside Heights” comeback game against Army (Columbia University, Oct. 25, 1947).
- Holds Columbia’s single-season record for extra point kick attempts (24 in 1948).
- Ranked 3rd all time at Columbia for single season extra point kick completions (23 in 1948).
- Drafted by Brooklyn Dodgers (AAFC).
- Offered contracts by the NY Giants (NFL) and the Cleveland Browns (NFL).

**Baseball**

- Tied for the Ivy League lead in hits as a freshman (1946).
- Batting average .354 (1947) and .375 (1948).
- Played baseball in the Pacific Insilcos (Philippines) after World War II.
- Played baseball for the International Silver Insilcos of Meriden during college summers.

**Golf**

- Won the CT Jr golf championship in the 1940s.
- Hit nine holes-in-one, including two on the same hole at Southington Country Club.
- Played with friends from the “Brother Bills,” a group of 16 regular players at Southington Country Club.
- Served as a volunteer “scoring waiter” at the Greater Hartford Open for most of the 1990s.

Matt Shepherd, grandson of the late Charlie Klemovich

Inducted into Cheshire Academy Sports Hall of Fame (1993).

- Offered contracts by the NY Giants (NFL) and the Cleveland Browns (NFL).