We played defense. We did fundamentals. We dribbled left handed, right handed. We went home exhausted and dropping. Everyone was wondering when those hoops were coming down. I’ll never forget that.

Walt Lozoski had a certain knack for winning no matter what the odds. Southington was never known as a basketball town, but Lozoski won on the hard-court. In the days of Lewis High School, Southington was farm-lands and forest. Lozoski found ways to beat the city schools.

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Former Blue Knight coach Walter Lozoski, right, with former Southington Athletic Director Joseph J. Fontana.

By JOHN GORALSKI
SPORTS WRITER

Walt Lozoski had a certain knack for winning no matter what the odds. Southington was never known as a basketball town, but Walt's first year he went undefeated in the league. He was always in con- tention. We never had the size. He was always deal- ing with the small, short Italian. It was just good coaching.

And a little bit of Yankee ingenuity. Long before John Fontana was a championship coach in the Southington dugout, he was a gangly teenager on Lozoski's first basketball team in 1950. He remembers walking into the gym for the first day of practice to see Lozoski standing in an empty gym with no baskets.

The first two weeks that we had practice he rolled all the hoops up. He took the basketball out, and for two weeks we never took a shot," Fontana said in a 2007 interview. "We played defense. We did funda- 

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The preparation paid off right away. The fledg- ling team met up with Wethersfield, a top-heavy powerhouse with a pair of all-state players, and Southington's defense held them to 27 points and a loss. It was the start of a strong winning tradition.

"He was a good foot- ball coach, but what a bas- ketball coach," hall of fame coach Joe Orsene said about his mentor. 'I would say that he's as good as anybody who's ever coached in Connecticut. If you name them all, Walt had better be on that list. That's how good he was.'

Just give him a ball, a rule book, and some play- ers, and Lozoski could put together a winning team. His career spanned three decades and three sports. His overall coaching record was 311-182 (.631). His teams won 12 league titles and a pair of state championships. His bas- ketball teams went 249- 162 over 21 years, and his four football teams went 24-8 with a Class B cham- pionship in 1957.

As if that wasn't enough, Lozoski created the town's varsity golf pro- gram and led the team to a 38-12 record over five years. In 1964, Lozoski was named as the CT High School golf coach of the year.

Hall of fame Mike Mauro played under Lozoski: Mauro set the standard for hitting in the 1950s with a single season hitting record that still stands, and he credits his coach for helping him reach his potential. "He was terrific. I wouldn't have gotten as far as I did if it wasn't for him," Mauro said. "A lot of what I achieved came from working with him. He was quite a ball player, himself, in his day. He took a liking to me, and did extra work with me—hitting wise and so forth."

Lozoski didn't have to be a coach. As a boy, he heard record that still stands, and he credits his coach for helping him reach his potential. "He was terrific. I wouldn't have gotten as far as I did if it wasn't for him," Mauro said. "A lot of what I achieved came from working with him. He was quite a ball player, himself, in his day. He took a liking to me, and did extra work with me—hitting wise and so forth."

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