What was the most memorable moment of your career? The question was tossed casually across the table at a local restaurant. John Crowley never hesitated. “It was against EO Smith, and we won 1-0,” he said. “That was a big rivalry for us. We really wanted to win.”

Athlete

Crowley remembers being marked by three defenders (even though the newspaper clipping five opponents). The goal sparked the team’s hopes, and seemed like a big turning point in Southington soccer. Oh yeah, the goal was scored by Fran Russo.

The favorite goal of Crowley’s career was a game-winner scored by a teammate in a rare contest where Crowley was held scoreless. For those that know him, it’s not so surprising.

“He was a great leader, a great team player, and obviously the greatest scorer that Southington High School ever had,” said former Blue Knight coach Dan Murawski. “Even beyond that, he was the type of athlete that I loved to have. He was the epitome of my perfect soccer player in his attitude and everything else.”

Crowley never welcomed the spotlight in 1983 when cameras were taken away from the football field to focus on the prolific scorer. Even now, he shifts in his seat and stares at the recorder as he’s forced to talk about his own accomplishments during his varsity days.

His favorite photo? An old, tattered newspaper clipping that shows Russo old, tattered newspaper clipping credits the most memorable moment of his career

“Once the game started, I could care who was on the sidelines. My focus was on the game, the ball, and the net. I knew he was going to win.”

Soon, scouts began to pepper the Southington sidelines, but Crowley kept his focus on the game, the ball, and the net.

“Then, he falls silent as his three-year career with the Knights as they pursue an elusive state title. In fact, he said, ‘To play at the high school level is something special. I always let them do their thing, but I love soccer. We need a state championship.’”

His love for the sport was one reason why Crowley was chosen to represent the program in the first class of the Southington Sports Hall of Fame. On Wednesday, Nov. 10, he will be inducted in a ceremony at the Aqua Turf in Plantsville.

“I was a little surprised, because I didn’t play in the big three—baseball, basketball, and football,” he said. “There have been a lot of other soccer players in our town, and it’s an honor to represent them.”

To comment on this story or to contact sports writer John Goralski, email him at goralisjk@southingtonobserver.com.