SOUTHINGTON HALL OF FAME

**Mike Mauro**

Mike Mauro was standing in the third base coaching box as a freshman when Coach Jay Fontana signaled him from the other side of the diamond. It was 1950. The seniors were anxious to start class night festivities, but Lewis High School had a runner in scoring position with two outs in extra innings.

Fontana signaled his freshman to grab a bat, and Mauro drove the ball between shortstop and third base to score the winning run.

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Mike Mauro throws a pitch during a freshman practice. Mauro was a top pitching prospect but became one of the top hitters in town history.

By JOHN GORALSKI

Mike Mauro was a standout athlete and baseball player in the mid-20th century. He was a top pitching prospect but became one of the top hitters in town history.

For Mauro, that hit sparked a storied scholastic career that would catapult him into the spotlight and secure a spot in town history with a record that has stood for more than six decades.

"I remember my heart pounding when Jay Fontana gave me my tryout at Lincoln Lewis to see if I could make the team," said Mauro. "Then, when I finally got my uniform, it was a big relief. It was my first uniform, and I was playing for the high school. Things are much, much different than they were back then."

Mauro remembers the competitiveness of their make-shift neighborhood games. His older brothers taught him the game. His first bat was made of wood but would hardly be considered a bat. He used gloves fashioned out of pie tins and played under the watchful gaze of his mother, Jennie, as she chased away police in her apron.

"It was still very competitive. You never wanted to lose. You always wanted to win," said Mauro. "All I did was eat and sleep baseball. We didn't have bats or balls or anything like that. The area we played in was a couple of driveways side-by-side with two houses right next to it...We played two, three, or four games often—especially in the summer time."

Those Liberty Street games helped hone the skills that would turn the heads of pro scouts and stakeholders in the sports industry. Mauro became an avid baseball player, scoring 13.4 points per game as a senior with two games over 23 points. After high school, he developed into a top bowler and bocce player, earning a championship in a United Nations bocce tournament in the 1980s.

"Mike was a natural athlete, and he's regarded as one of the best baseball hitters in town history," said former sports writer Art Secondo. "His average reflects that. He had the highest single-season average ever. If he picked up any kind of round ball—whether it was baseball, bocce, bowling—he was just good at it."

That's why Mauro was an easy selection for the first class of the Southington Sports Hall of Fame. On Wednesday, Nov. 10, he will be honored in an induction ceremony at the Aqua Turf in Plantsville.

To comment on this story, email John Goralski@southingtonobserver.com.