He’s an all-American boy
Ray Michanczyk is a big man with a big heart

By JOHN GORALSKI
SPORTS WRITER

Ray Michanczyk leaped through a stack of newspaper clippings, and sat perched at faded photos of teammates and statistics. A list of line-

men from the 1949 Lewis High team just rolls off his tongue without missing a beat. He lists hench players and role player, running backs and assistant coaches. When being named to the high school all-American football team in 1951, he stops what he’s saying and whips out a copy of the release. Like a wide-eyed kid, he skips over his name and points to the others on the list.

“When I went out to the University of Washington, Sandy Lederman was quar-
terback,” he said. “He was from Connecticut. You can see who the quarterbacks were—Bill Starr and Earl Miura. I played with [Ronald] Latorraca at Staunton Military Academy. They all made the list.” It’s not what you would expect from the turn of first all-Americans—”Who would he like to be remembered?” he asked, and a puzzled look spread across his face. He almost seems surprised to be among the first to be induct-
ed into the Southington Sports Hall of Fame. “I want to be remem-
bered as only being as good as the people I played with,” he said. “The rest comes. It just takes hard work. The value is not always in how many points you scored yourself. It was when you played the game. If a kid went out there and played hard the whole time but only scored five points while I scored 25, how much of those passes came from him? Wasn’t he a part of my accomplishments?”

In today’s world of sta-
tistics and headlines, 
Michanczyk might sound too good to be true. But sta-
tistics never were the meas-
ure for his career. If you’re looking for a true team play-
er, you have to look no fur-
ther than Michanczyk’s sto-
rade career. He was a sophomore on the 1949 Staunton Military Academy football team, an under-
classman, a tight end, and a kicker. He scored just a pair of extra points during that storied season and just 12 touchdowns all through his career. Yet Michanczyk was the one that made the all-
American list in 1951.

“We were in the single wing, and primarily that single 
wing was a running for-
mation,” he said. “The only time that you’d pass out of that formation was a reverse pass going either right or left and a lot of button hook passes, which is just a simple seven, eight, or nine yard hook into the middle or out to the flanks. In desperation, if you were behind, you’d go a little deeper in a pattern.”

Still the 200-pound underclassman was at the center of the action. Bill Albrecht set a state scoring record with 155 points in 1949, but he credits the line-
men and his tight end for paving the way.

“If I didn’t have that line, I wouldn’t have done as well as I did,” said Albrecht. “I only saw him play in high school one year, and that was when he was a sopho-
more. He played left end, and he was good. He played hard. He was a good blocker. He was a good pass receiver. He was a basketball player, so you know he had a good pair of hands on him. He was a great football player.”

Once again, Michanczyk credits others for his success. He honed his skills in sandlot games, stud-
ed semi-pro players on the Southington Greens. He’d 
travel to Meriden and New 
Britain to watch basketball games and held practice those moves in pick-up 
games whenever he could. They used to have to kick me out of the YMCA because I just loved sports,” he said. “There weren’t many fields, so you’d go behind 
churches and play. Weld play in a ditch 20 yards long just to run the ball. If you didn’t have a ball, you’d just take a potato sack and roll it up. It was a lot of fun.”

With no Little League or 
midget football to develop his skills, Michanczyk had to wait for high school to play 
an organized game. But he didn’t have to wait long. He played four years of varsity 
football, four years of varsity 
basketball, and started two years on the baseball team.

He was a true three-
sport athlete. He scored 
1,015 points as a “rebounds-
er” in the winter. He hit .398 as an infielder and relief 
pitcher. Michanczyk seemed to be attracted to support 
rules but always seemed to rise to the top. The six-foot 
two center was usually out-
 sized as a big man in basket-
ball, but even that didn’t 
stop him.

“I was always playing 
against guys 6’5” or 6’6”, but 
the best thing was getting by 
them with quick feet,” he said. “If you were athletic and in good shape, you could always get by a big guy with quickness and speed. If you were small, you had to be fast, and you moved the ball around.”

During this time, he perfected his game. On the basketball court, Walt 
Luznoki stressed fundamen-
tals, refusing to let 
Michanczyk shoot hook 
shots because it would hurt his rebounding. On the grid-
iron, Jay Fontana recruited C. Edwin Creed who would go on to coach at Central CT State University. Creed would work with 
Michanczyk in practice to develop his receiving skills.

“Tell he’s teaching that it wasn’t just running out and going five yards. He’d teach you about faking, faking, and pivoting. He’d show you how to use your body to break loose and how to use your speed—with whom to start it up and when to slow it down,” Michanczyk said. “They taught me how to be a good receiver.”

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drew the attention of college 
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highly prized for basketball and even earned a 
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Michanczyk’s accomplishments seemed 
to keep piling up. He was 
recruited in football. He was 
drafted in baseball. He picked his 
paths for Staunton Military Academy in Virginia. This was a big turn-

ing point in his career. “You had to forget what you did in high school, and you got to see what you really made of,” he said. “Was high school just easy? They had the cream of the crop. They had five guys that were going to Michigan State. The coaching was very good. We played in the Military League and we scrambled against top-notch football teams.”

Michanczyk made the 
Staunton football squad in 1953, and his team earned 
the military championship with an 8-1 record. His bas-
ketball team averaged 38 points per game. The coach 
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No. 45 swats an opponents during a Southington High School varsity game in the early 1950s.

SUBMITTED

I want to share my accomplishments with everyone I played with. They all deserve a piece of the action.

Ray Michanczyk, Former Southington Athlete

Hall of Fame

Southington Sports Hall of Fame

Inside the Numbers

Football (109 points)

•1949—Scored 2 points (0 TDs, 2 PATs)
•1950—Scored 70 points (8 TDs, 22 PATs)
•1951—Scored 37 points (4 TEs, 13 PATs)
•All-state (1950, 51)
•All-American (1951)
•Member of the Class B Champions (1949)
•Won Eastern States Championship with Staunton Academy (1953)
•Played in Olympic Junior Games (1954)
•Tight end for University of Washington (1955)
•Signed letter of intent with GB Packers (1957)

Basketball (1,015 points)

•1948—19 games, 37 points, 1.9 avg.
•1949—14 games, 230 points, 16.4 avg.
•1950—51 games, 384 points, 7.5 avg.
•1951—52 games, 364 points, 17.3 avg.
•Won Eastern States Championship with Staunton Academy (1953)

Baseball

•Hit over .398 in his career (1951-1952)
•Invited for tryout with Brooklyn Dodgers (1951)
•Inducted into SHS baseball hall of fame (1996)

Coaching

•Class B champions (Asst Coach Chaote Rosemary Hall, 1993)
•Part owner, manager, coach for Hartford Crusaders, Mustangs (1989-1995)

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